

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

A Step-By-Step Guide for Your Trip with EcoTeach



EcoTEACH

Initial Steps

- ☐ Talk to teachers who have traveled with us before to determine if our program is a good fit. We will provide you with names and contact information upon request.
- ☐ Decide if this will be a school-sponsored trip or one that you organize privately. Talk to your principal and school administration about the school's policy on international trips.
- ☐ If you present the trip to your principal or the school board, talk about how an EcoTeach trip fits with the school's mission statement.
- ☐ If interested, talk with your school administration about designing the trip as a course and offering credit to students who participate.
- ☐ Pick potential trip dates. Talk to our team about what types of activities you are interested in doing and how you would like to handle flights.



Create Trip Interest & Sign Up Participants

- ☐ Start early! Many trip leaders begin the process more than a year in advance. Talk to your students, other staff, and school clubs about the trip. We'll create a customized web page for your group with all the details of your trip that you can use as a marketing tool to get potential participants excited about the trip.
- ☐ Set a date for an informational meeting. Send out a letter, put up posters, and send out an email inviting parents & students to this meeting. Our team will be happy to join to talk through the different activities.
- ☐ Think about fundraising if your students need help covering their costs. Our booking software, WeTravel, allows participants to set up a contribution page that can be shared with families and friends.
- ☐ Decide how you will select participants. First come, first serve? Give priority to students in upper grades? Select students through an application process? Will parents or other adults be allowed to join the group?
- ☐ Share EcoTeach contact information with parents. We're happy to talk about any aspect of our trips, and we can put parents in contact with others who have participated in or sent a child on one of our trips.
- ☐ Introduce yourself and talk about why you want to lead this trip, how it fits into the school mission or complements classroom work.



- ☐ Go over the itinerary, trip costs, what's included and what's not, due dates, and refund policy.
- ☐ Have a sign-up sheet asking for student name, parent name, email address, and phone number.
- ☐ Explain the process you plan to use for selecting applicants.
- ☐ Provide the link to the customized web page that includes the itinerary and all the other details. Give a *firm due date* to register and pay the deposit.
- ☐ Leave time for questions. Answer those you can and make a list of those you can't answer to go over with EcoTeach staff.
- ☐ Once you have at least 8-10 committed participants, the trip is a "go" and you can have the students start registering. We'll create a customized web page for your group where they can register. You will be able to add participants to your group until approximately 3 months prior to travel.

Payments

- ☐ Each participant must register online (we will send a unique link for your group) and pay the \$300 non-refundable deposit via ACH, credit card, or check. Trip Leaders must register online, but do not have to pay the deposit.
- ☐ Once registrations are complete and deposits received, participants will receive emails from our booking system to complete additional required paperwork and how/when to make trip payments.
- ☐ If you would prefer a different payment process, please let us know and we can work out a system that meets both our needs.
- ☐ Payment Due Dates:
 - o Nonrefundable deposit due upon signup: \$300 deposit
 - o Payment due 7 months prior to departure: 1/3 trip fee
 - o Payment due 5 months prior to departure: 1/3 trip fee
 - o Payment due 2 months prior to departure: 1/3 trip fee



Required Paperwork

- ☐ 1) **Participant Code of Conduct:** This form is for all travelers (students, trip leaders, and chaperones) and must be signed by the traveler and a parent/guardian if under 18 and submitted via the WeTravel booking site.
- ☐ 2) **Notarized Affidavit for Permission to Travel:** This form is required for participants under the age of 18. It must be signed and notarized by both parents/guardians, even if one parent is traveling with the student. ***Trip leaders should keep the affidavits and bring them on the trip.*** You do not need to provide EcoTeach with copies.
- ☐ 3) **Copy of Passport:** Please have all participants (including trip leaders and chaperones) make a copy of the first page of their passport and submit them to you prior to departure. ***Keep the passport copies and bring them on the trip.***
- ☐ 4) **Cancellation Form:** Participants wishing to cancel must submit the official EcoTeach cancellation form. Participants are considered active group members until the cancellation form is received. Refunds, where applicable, will be calculated in accordance with the refund policy. The cancellation form can be found on the group's itinerary page.



Travel Insurance

Travel insurance for each participant is required for EcoTeach trips. You can use any insurance company you prefer, but we recommend **Wanderwell**. The least expensive option is post-departure insurance which does not cover cancellations or flights. The insurance must cover medical emergencies, emergency evacuation, and partial trip interruption.

Purchase insurance through Wanderwell

Educate Participants on the Area Where You Are Traveling

Listed below are several suggestions to prepare your group for the experience.

- ☐ Our team can hold an online meeting to help the group get ready.
- ☐ Our team can also schedule a virtual sea turtle presentation for your trip.
- ☐ Additionally, we can provide a list of helpful resources (websites, articles, and videos) for each destination.



Putting it Together

Staying on top of trip logistics doesn't have to be difficult or time consuming. Put together an email list of participants and their parents for easy communication, and plan to hold a minimum of 3 meetings with participants and parents. On the next page are suggested agendas for these meetings.



Putting it Together

Approximately 8-10 months before the trip:

- ☐ Go over the itinerary, required paperwork, costs, due dates, and refund policy.
- ☐ Talk about passports. Passports are required for all participants. Encourage those with passports to find them and check the expiration date - *passports must be valid for at least 6 months after travel*. Those without passports should apply for one as soon as possible. If you have participants from another country, make sure they contact the embassy to check entry requirements.
- ☐ Call a local travel health clinic and ask if someone will speak to your group about travel health and immunizations. While no immunizations are required to enter Costa Rica, Belize, or the Galapagos Islands as of July 2026, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does provide certain recommendations. Encourage participants to consult a medical professional or a travel clinic. EcoTeach does not provide medical advice.
- ☐ Make sure parents & students have access to your group's customized web page. This will give them access to your itinerary, flight details, payment due dates, forms that need to be completed, links to the CDC, passport information, travel insurance, suggested packing list, FAQs, etc.
- ☐ Make sure that all participating registrants have paid the deposit and are up-to-date on the necessary paperwork.

Putting it Together

Approximately 3-4 months before the trip:

- ☐ Ask EcoTeach for a “Trip Leader Update” report to review information and payments that have been made. After the meeting, speak to any participants who are not current on paperwork or payments.
- ☐ Talk about tips for the guides and driver.
- ☐ Invite a notary so parents can notarize the travel affidavit for minors at the meeting (if both parents/guardians are present).
- ☐ Collect passport copies and notarized affidavits. Keep these to bring on the trip.
- ☐ Give an update on fundraisers, if any.
- ☐ Leave time for Q&A.



Putting it Together

2 months before the trip:

- ☐ Ensure that all participants have made the final trip payment (due two months before trip). That can be done online on your customized trip page.
- ☐ Collect any remaining passport copies and notarized affidavits.
- ☐ Provide flight information.
- ☐ Encourage participants to set up a frequent flier account if they want to collect miles.
- ☐ Plan where and when to meet on the day of departure (at the school and carpool to the airport, meet at the airline counter, or another location)
- ☐ Create an email list of parents and add an EcoTeach staff person to the list so that we can provide additional updates if available during your trip.
- ☐ Schedule a call with our team to review the itinerary and what to expect when you arrive in the country.

Finalize Details

- ☐ We recommend you re-check your flight times a few days prior to departure.
- ☐ Ask participants to confirm the flight times 24 hours prior to departure.
- ☐ Review the Trip Leader Pre-Departure document.
- ☐ Check to make sure you have:
 - o Notarized affidavits for all participants under 18
 - o Copies of everyone's passports
 - o Trip itinerary overview
 - o Flight information & airport map
 - o EcoTeach Contact information
- ☐ Board the plane and relax – your local guides will be waiting for you when you arrive and will partner with you to ensure an amazing adventure for everyone.





About EcoTeach

EcoTeach was founded by teachers on a simple idea: the most meaningful learning happens outside the classroom. Since 1994, we've designed immersive travel programs that connect people to ecosystems, cultures, and conservation efforts.

Over the years, EcoTeach has supported turtle research programs, educational efforts, and local communities. In 2026, EcoTeach was acquired by SEE Turtles, an award-winning conservation nonprofit and longtime partner. This will strengthen EcoTeach's commitment to conservation and ensure all profits go to support our mission.

www.EcoTeach.com



About SEE Turtles

SEE Turtles was launched in 2008 as the world's first effort to protect these species through conservation travel. Our mission is to connect people with sea turtles in meaningful, personal, and memorable ways. We help the sea turtle community connect, grow, and thrive by supporting community-based conservation efforts.

For our efforts, we have been awarded the Global Vision Award from Travel + Leisure, the Changemakers Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council, and others. SEE Turtles is an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Portland, Oregon.

www.SEEturtles.org