

# Friends School Haverford

## Costa Rica Studies Program

*A Partnership Between FSH &  
Altos de San Luis, Costa Rica*





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The Costa Rica Studies Program reflects the tenets of the Friends School Haverford mission statement fostering a lifelong love of learning, grounded in an appreciation of that of God in everyone. The learning environment challenges and stimulates our students to achieve their full potential. Students practice the Quaker values of integrity, equality, service, community, simplicity and peaceful problem solving.

## Foundations

The seeds of the Costa Rica Studies Program are first sown when the youngest children enter Friends School Haverford. The early elementary curriculum promotes an appreciation of the earth, as well as service to others. Students begin speaking Spanish and practicing Quaker values. By the time students reach the 4th grade, a strong foundation of core values has been established. Within this framework of values, the Costa Rica Studies Program begins for these emerging global citizens.

## Curricular Implementation

**Environmental Education**—Students learn to be stewards of the earth by understanding, preserving, and restoring the earth's resources. Costa Rica's tropical forests and fascinating wildlife inspire FSH faculty and students to become more aware of our interactions with the environment in order to promote a sustainable future for all life.

**Global Awareness**—A part of the core curriculum at FSH is to help students develop an awareness and an appreciation of other countries and their cultures and people.

## **Integrated Curriculum**

– Important connections are made to other disciplines. In the arts, students study Hispanic artists, music and literature. Students draw and create the animals of the rainforest. They sharpen their math skills by measuring coffee, learning another currency, and exploring exchange rates and the metric system.



**Language Arts** – Includes school plays, research projects and papers, journal writing and essays with Costa Rica as a central topic. Fourth grade has performed a musical adaptation of *When the Monkeys Came Back*, based on the book by Kristine L. Franklin that is set in a valley very much like the San Luis Valley of Costa Rica. The sixth graders write personal narratives about their experiences and create a narrative slide show.

**Peaceful Living** – The Quaker value of peaceful problem-solving is introduced in the preschool classroom, and the emphasis on conflict resolution continues through sixth grade. In a nurturing environment, children learn to respond to each other with respect and kindness, and come to understand the importance of cooperation. Costa Ricans take pride in being the first nation in history to abolish its army, becoming a practical demonstration to the world and a learning environment for our students.

**Science** – The study of Costa Rica brings to life many important science concepts, such as topography, geology, biodiversity, evolution and climate. More than a dozen distinct climatic patterns, extremes of elevations, earth movement and the flora and fauna of North and South America, the Caribbean and the Pacific result in an incredible diversity of terrain, biota and weather in this tropical country. Students plan and grow an herb garden at FSH comprised of herbs used in Latin America with which they make a Hispanic meal.

**Service to Others** – Friends education strives to emphasize social responsibility. FSH emphasizes the development of a caring community and service to others, which helps our students grow

into compassionate and responsible adults. Our students have reached out to a small rural farming community in northwestern Costa Rica, and to the students of our partner school. They have raised thousands of dollars for reforestation efforts, stable electricity, consistent water supply and much needed school supplies.

**Social Studies** – Children focus on the people of Costa Rica and the country’s culture of peace. Students learn about Costa Rica’s peaceful formation of a democracy and study the life of Nobel Peace Prize recipient and Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez. They compare and contrast our government, education system, environment and economy with those of another country.

**Spanish** – Students are first introduced to Spanish when they enter Heritage House. Simple words and expressions are woven into daily activities in a seamless and natural way. The program continues in the elementary grades with a gradual building of concepts through games, songs and stories. An appreciation of Hispanic culture and an emphasis on oral communication are important cornerstones of the program. In fifth grade, students begin a pen-pal program with our partner school in Costa Rica, which continues through the sixth grade. By the time the students are in sixth grade, they have acquired a solid foundation of the basic skills. The Costa Rica Study Tour to Monteverde is the exciting culmination of many years of language study. The students are well prepared and ready to try their language skills in this exciting full-immersion experience!



**Quakerism**—Our students learn about the Quakers who left the United States in the early 1950's and settled in Monteverde, and their ongoing efforts to protect the cloud forest, support the local community and assist the people of the San Luis Valley. This is an excellent example of the important Quaker values of stewardship and peace, applied to real lives and making a difference.



## **A Global Community of Friends**

Our partnership with the Altos de San Luis community of Costa Rica began in 2002 with the Café Monteverde coffee project supporting Finca La Bella, and has grown over the years to include and impact the entire community.

Through this partnership, our faculty and students have had the unique opportunity to make a significant contribution to the quality of life in a rural farming community, to develop life long relationships, and to witness first hand the fruits of their community service. Each year, this unique relationship strengthens the bonds of friendship between us, and has taught our children the true meaning and value of a global community of friends.

## **The Quaker Community**

The saga of the Quakers of Monteverde is a story in itself. In the 1940s many U.S. Quakers refused to register for the draft, and some were imprisoned as conscientious objectors. A small group of Quakers from Fairhope, Alabama chose to leave the United States in 1950, at the height of the Korean War, to seek a peaceful life in Costa Rica, a stable democracy that had recently abolished its armed forces. There they settled high in the Tilaran mountain range on land that they named Monteverde (which means “Green Mountain” in Spanish). Today Monteverde is a thriving community and home to one of the most successful dairies in Central America. From its inception, the Quaker

community has played an active role in protecting the environment and living out its Quaker values in the broader community. Members of the Monteverde Meeting were instrumental in creating and preserving the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, establishing Finca La Bella, and introducing FSH to the people of Atos de San Luis, our partners and friends.



## The San Luis Community

**The San Luis Valley** – Is located in the Cordillera de Tilaran mountain range just below the world-famous Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. This peaceful, rural valley has an idyllic pastoral landscape, made up primarily of small coffee plantations, bordered by emerald-green forested mountain slopes that frame a breathtaking view of the Golfo de Nicoya and the Pacific Ocean.

**Altos de San Luis** – Perched at the top of the Valley is the farming community of Altos de San Luis. This rural farming community is bisected by one narrow winding road that serves the farms, a small grocery store, an elementary school, and The University of Georgia Ecolodge and Tropical Field Station.

**Finca La Bella** – “The Beautiful Farm” is a 122-acre plantation that was created, with the help and support of the Quaker community of Monteverde, as a project in sustainable agriculture for landless families; each family is allotted a 25-year renewable lease on two to four acres. About a third of the farm is preserved as forest. Along with other small growers, the farmers of Finca La Bella provide the coffee for Café Monteverde.

**Escuela Altos de San Luis** – Across the road from Finca La Bella sits our partner school, a tiny elementary school with a big heart. Here the children of the upper valley attend school through 6th grade.

**University of Georgia Ecology and Tropical Field Station** – Is a scientific research facility owned and operated by the University of Georgia primarily for the use of faculty and graduate students conducting tropical field research. In addition, they offer environmental education classes and workshops for elementary age students. Each year our students participate in workshops to study tropical insects and plants with the naturalists and tropical field biologists, and hike along the beautiful cloud forest trails.

### **Community Service**

**Café Monteverde** – The sale of Café Monteverde within the FSH community has raised thousands of dollars to support Finca La Bella. With this money the farmers of Finca La Bella have been able to:

- Continue construction of a hostel for international visitors who come to share and learn sustainable agricultural methods.
- Re-grade farm paths and roads to improve runoff and to prevent erosion.
- Purchase materials to construct a new and reliable water system for the entire farm to provide fresh water to each home and irrigation lines to the fields.
- Make a monetary contribution to the San Luis Valley Community Association to help pay for a connection to the Monteverde electrical grid, and for the installation of new and more reliable electric service in the Valley.

**Escuela Altos de San Luis** – Since the first donation of one hundred dollars was used to provide a school uniform for a child in need and a few new books where there were previously none, thousands of dollars have been raised and donated to Escuela Altos de San Luis to



supply additional books and materials for the children of the Valley. The school purchased its first computer and printer so that teachers can prepare lessons. Unsafe play equipment has been removed, new bathrooms have been built, and classrooms have received a fresh coat of paint, new lighting, and desks.



### **The Costa Rica Study Tour**

The Costa Rica Study Tour is a seven-day educational trip to the beautiful cloud forest of Monteverde. Occurring since 2004, the trip takes place each February for the sixth grade students, who are accompanied by teacher-chaperones and one full-time guide from Costa Rica. The focus of the tour reflects many integral aspects of FSH's curriculum: environmental studies, Spanish, social studies, Quakerism, community service and global awareness.

### **A Multi-Purpose Trip**

- To experience first hand a region of the world that the students have studied for the past three years.
- To witness up-close how FSH's fundraising efforts have made such a positive difference in the lives of the people in the San Luis Valley.
- To develop an appreciation for a totally new culture; one that is poor in some ways and rich in others.
- To experience the intrinsic benefits of international travel.
- To participate in Meeting for Worship in a new country.

## An Open Classroom

The Costa Rica Study Tour has been carefully planned to include a robust program in which students are busy and engaged in meaningful activities. All day long, the students are involved in experiential learning across the curriculum. Students are encouraged to use their language skills throughout the trip; the bus driver, the waiters in the restaurants, the guides in the parks and preserves, the hotel staff and shopkeepers all offer endless opportunities to practice Spanish each day. At every step of the way, students are supported and encouraged as they discover they can communicate effectively with the native speakers. By the end of the week, the student's language skills improve and their confidence soars.

### Highlights of the Week's Activities

- The La Paz butterfly gardens and dramatic waterfalls
- Poas Volcano with its deep crater
- A ferry ride across Lake Arenal with spectacular views of Arenal Volcano
- Spelunking in natural caves
- An evening swim at nearby Hot Springs
- A day of friendship and cultural exchange at Escuela Altos de San Luis Partner School



- Picking coffee beans at a Finca La Bella coffee farm
- Homemade meals with local families
- Visiting the University of Georgia biological station
- A nocturnal tour of the Children's Eternal Rainforest
- Canopy tour and zip line excursion
- Touring the cloud forest in all its rich biodiversity
- Tour of the Monteverde Cheese Factory and historical tour of Monteverde
- Meeting for Worship with the founders of the Monteverde Quaker Community

### Personal Growth

In addition to the tour's many educational opportunities, students uncover a new layer of self-awareness during the seven days in Monteverde. There are new foods and new surroundings. The country seems poor, yet it doesn't take the students long to realize that for Costa Ricans, happiness is not solely based on material possessions. Minds are stretched and eyes are opened to new experiences. Everyone discovers, with the support of their peers and teachers, how to deal successfully with various challenges. By the end of the trip, each student is able to see his/her peers and him/herself in a new light and with a greater sense of compassion. The experience of traveling to another country encourages the sixth graders to take stock of themselves and to step outside the boundaries of their own comfort zone; a valuable and timely lesson, as they prepare to transition to their next schools.

### How You Can Support Our Efforts

There are several ongoing service projects managed by our fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students, their families, and their teachers, that the FSH community is invited to support:

**Coffee Sale.** Café Monteverde is special coffee grown in harmony with the Monteverde Cloud Forest of Costa Rica. The fourth grade sells this coffee in support of the Ann Kriebel/San Luis Project. Profits go directly to the Finca La Bella Farmers' Association. Several varieties are available in 1/2 lb. or 1 lb. bags. Order forms can be downloaded from the School's website:  
[www.friendshaverford.org](http://www.friendshaverford.org).



### **Partner School Fundraiser.**

An annual fundraiser has been established for Escuela Altos de San Luis. The students of this small school are happy and eager to learn, but they are in need of basic school supplies—pencils, crayons, paper, books, and more. Thousands of dollars have been raised to support the children of Escuela Alto de San Luis and carry on the

legacy of Ann Kriebel, a Quaker who dedicated her life to teaching and improving the literacy of the farmers of the San Luis Valley.

### **Puntos Para La Paz—Points for Peace**

The newest fund raising event invites our community to make a financial pledge to sponsor students in Puntos Para le Paz, a joint 4th, 5th and 6th grade annual basketball event in support of the Altos de San Luis community. Each point scored not only earns money for the community but also is a point for peace, a point that promotes global awareness and social responsibility, a point that helps to build a global community of friends.

**Scholarship Fund.** FSH families can support the wonderful opportunity presented to our sixth graders by making a contribution to the Costa Rica Scholarship Fund. Donations help ensure that every sixth grade student can afford the study tour.

For more information, contact Director of Development Andrea Dominic at 610-642-0353 or [adominic@friendshaverford.org](mailto:adominic@friendshaverford.org).

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