



JARDIN DE MARIPOSAS  
**MONTEVERDE**  
BUTTERFLY GARDENS

# Internship Information Package



# Table of Contents

## **Section 1: What to Expect**

- I. About MBG
- II. Purpose of Internship
- III. Internship Summary
- IV. Work Schedule
- V. Accommodation & Meals
- VI. A Day in the Life

## **Section 2: Preparing For The Internship**

- VII. Packing List
- VIII. Pre-Arrival Readings
- IX. Getting to MBG
- X. Financials
- XI. Contact



# Section 1: What to Expect



## I. About MBG

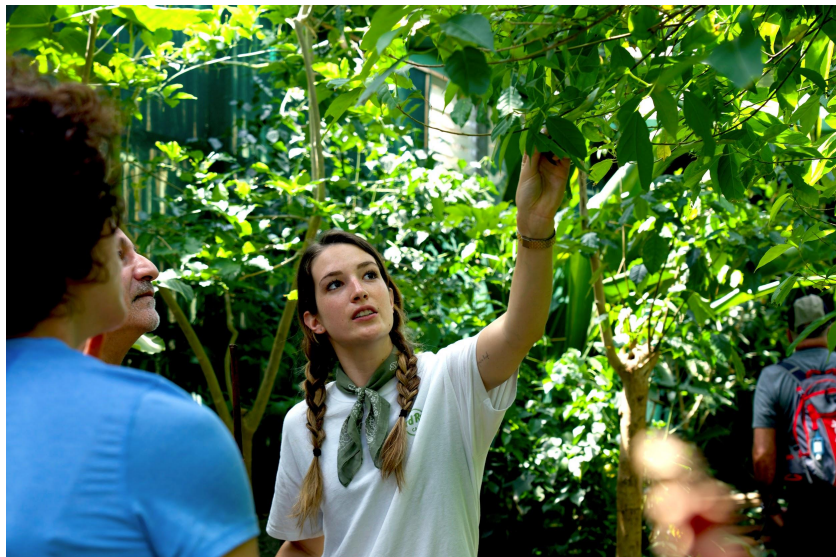
Here at the Monteverde Butterfly Gardens (or, as we like to call it around here, the MBG), we have been teaching people about Costa Rica's insects and arachnids for over 30 years. We have made it our mission to change the way people think about these small, misunderstood creatures. With up to 30 species of butterfly in four different habitats, over 15 species of live insects and arachnids in our Nature Centre, and an active leaf-cutter ant colony, the MBG prides itself on being a fun and educational experience for visitors to Costa Rica!

## II. Purpose of Internship

Our internships are a ten-week program primarily designed for people looking to improve their **science communication** and **nature interpretation** skills while getting their hands dirty helping out with the daily maintenance of the gardens. You will undergo an intensive study program teaching you to give interpretative tours of our facility including our butterfly habitats, leafcutter ant colony, and collection of other insects and arachnids. No previous study in entomology is required; we teach you everything you need to know on-site!

## III. Internship Summary

Upon arrival, you will be given an orientation to the gardens and begin learning everything you need to know to become an MBG tour guide. This includes, for example, drilling flashcards to learn the butterfly names, shadowing experienced guides, and learning from our Internship Manual until you become confident with the content and delivery required of a tour. Our tours are of approx. one hour and fifteen minutes' duration, usually with fewer than ten people but occasionally up to eighteen. Our focus is on educating people about bugs in a non-intimidating and entertaining manner.



Interns generally begin giving partial tours (of the butterfly gardens and ant colony only) within a few days, and full tours (including the insect and arachnid collection) within a week or so - but, of course, everybody is different and we tailor the learning process to each individual.

Once you begin giving tours, the real learning begins! We have a series of modules designed as an intensive course in topics relevant to our mission, all of which will improve your guiding and enrich your tours - examples include modules on interpretation, insect orders, and plant identification. We are here to help and support you through the learning process, but expect you to be independent and self-directed throughout your internship - you won't gain nearly as much from the experience if you're not motivated and ready to learn!

Aside from giving tours, interns are also expected to contribute **physical labor**, lending a hand with the tasks required to keep the gardens and facilities at their best. Expect to help out with all the jobs we have at the MBG - from egg and larvae collection to cleaning bathrooms, raking trails and more. We don't have dedicated cleaning or maintenance staff; everyone pitches in to reach our goals. This is a significant part of the experience, so you should come with a willingness to get your hands dirty and contribute to some of the less-than-glamorous work involved in running a sustainable facility!

Finally, when you have completed the modules and associated quizzes involved in the internship (often around Week 6), you can take on an independent project. This is something that contributes a lasting impact on the gardens while developing your own skills in an area of interest. Examples of past projects include the creation of a leafcutter ant natural history and care manual, painting nature murals on windows around the facility to stop bird collisions, documenting the moths coming to our moth light each night on iNaturalist, building benches to create a relaxing area to sit by the trails, and collecting data on snake deaths on the road between Monteverde and Arenal.

### ***Requirements for the position include:***

- Punctual and reliable.
- Great public speaker.
- Comfort handling insects and arachnids or willingness to learn.
- Eager to give 1-5 interpretive tours on a daily basis.
- Total comfort in spoken English, with other languages always appreciated.
- Ability to live in a remote Costa Rican setting with limited amenities.
- Willingness to live in dorm-style accommodation and share a living space (kitchen etc.) with up to eight other volunteers and interns.



- Ability to follow directions with attention to detail.
- Self-motivated and directed approach to learning.
- A positive ‘can-do’ attitude and ability to thrive in a team setting.
- Comfortable talking about our planet’s evolutionary history spanning millions of years.
- Proof of Travel Insurance, Covid, HepA&B and tetanus vaccines.

Note that knowledge of Spanish is not required for your stay; Monteverde is a popular tourist destination and you can get by with only English. However, you are encouraged to come with a willingness to pick up the basics while you’re here! People in Monteverde are generally very patient with beginner Spanish speakers, and learning to order food and navigate a basic conversation in Spanish is a fun challenge!

*Intern responsibilities include (but are not limited to):*

- Guiding informative and entertaining one-hour and fifteen minute tours for groups of up to eighteen people of various ages, nationalities and backgrounds.
- Taking charge of one or more of the morning setup tasks at the gardens and consistently performing tasks as trained; for example, cleaning bathrooms, sweeping trails, setting out fruit for the butterflies, etc.
- Working on tasks related to the upkeep and maintenance of the gardens and living space. including weeding, potting plants, shoveling dirt and soil bags, larvae collection, aphid control
- Cooking meals and cleaning the kitchen after meals.
- Working through a set of learning modules including completing readings, using flashcards, studying slideshows, doing workshops and walks with staff.
- Producing two to three short presentations on natural history or related topics of interest to present to fellow interns throughout your stay (presentations are one evening weekly and are done on a rotational roster).
- Participating in occasional night walks through gardens and surrounding trails in search of insects and for pest control.
- Doing your part to keep communal areas tidy, including the kitchen, reception area, etc.

#### **IV. Work Schedule**

On work days, you are expected to start work at 8:00am. You will generally finish by 4:30-5pm (dependent on tour timing and the afternoon/shutdown tasks you are in charge of). You will have two free days each week to explore the town and the many nearby reserves. Your days off will change each

week. We do ask you to not be in the work area or kitchen during work hours on your days off, which means you should pack a lunch before 7:45 am if you are not planning to eat in town. There is limited access to wifi from the casita where you are welcome to stay on your days off.

There are plenty of things to see and do around the Monteverde area. The main activity is hiking, and there are indeed lots of reserves close by reflecting several different ecosystems. Reserves range from the cloud forest-based Monteverde and Santa Elena Reserves to the pre-montane Bajo del Tigre, the birder's paradise Curicancha, the scenic and very close-by Ecological Sanctuary, and many more! Ziplining is also a popular tourist activity around town, and several companies offer coffee and chocolate tours (or ask us for family-run recommendations!). There are several natural history-focused places that offer tours including a bat center and orchid garden. For rainy or lazy days, you can take your pick of several bakeries and cafes, some of which do excellent specialty coffee from local beans.

You should note that it is very difficult to get off the mountain to other destinations of interest even if you do have consecutive days off. For this reason, **don't** plan on traveling much beyond Monteverde on your off days - despite plenty of tourism, Monteverde is still a remote and rural place. Save your travel plans for after your internship!

## **V. Accommodation & Meals**

### *Lodging:*

Interns live on-site, either in a small eco-accommodation called the casita (which is across the road from the main MBG facilities) or in rooms under the reception area of the gardens. The casita has a small kitchen that can be used to cook meals, make coffee etc. on your days off (and you are welcome to use it for this purpose even if you live in one of the gardens-side rooms). It has running water, small solar lights and a gas stove. We **do not** have access to an oven or microwave in the casita kitchen but do have an oven in the main kitchen, however most cooking is done on the stovetop. The casita has limited electricity which is only used for the lights and a small sink with drinkable water. There is a fridge/freezer in the main, gardens-side kitchen.

No matter where you sleep, rooms are dormitory style with a bunk bed in each room, so you will generally be living with one other intern as a roommate. Rooms are small and mostly off-grid, garden-side rooms have a socket for charging phones however if you live in the casita you can charge phones in the kitchens charging station.

Internet at MBG is often slow and unreliable, and occasionally the phone lines in town are down for a day or more. However, many places close by in Monteverde offer a faster and more reliable connection (with which you can, for example, make video calls - sometimes tricky on the MBG wifi!).

We strive to be as eco-friendly as possible so we expect our interns to act in an environmentally-conscious manner while here. Some of our facilities run on solar power, and we occasionally run out of power in the evenings in the casita. To save power we also ask you to be meticulous about turning lights off when you leave a room and minimizing electricity usage in general.

Everyone is generally encouraged to pee outside to save water. We also have a composting toilet (outhouse) for you to use; flushing toilets are for visitors only. There is a solar shower next to the casita - hot water availability is weather-dependent but usually the water is at least warm. You are encouraged to save water by taking short showers and not showering every day - especially important when you live with up to eight other people! There is no greywater treatment here so we ask you to please bring **biodegradable** products wherever possible. There is a washing machine on site which you are welcome to use in the evenings, however minimizing washing is encouraged to save water!

### *Meals:*

We provide basic food for you to make meals: rice and beans, spices, Lizano sauce (costa rican sauce great with gallo pinto) oats, wheat and corn flour, fresh fruit and vegetables, limited eggs, coffee and tea, etc. We will show you how to make classic gallo pinto and other easy meals with the ingredients available when you arrive. You can survive and be full and content with the food we offer, but most interns choose to buy some additional food items such as bread, peanut butter, chocolate or biscuits. There are multiple grocery shops in town and a corner shop about ten minutes' walk away. These also have many of the other products you may need for daily life (toothpaste, hair products, soap, etc.). Some items come at a higher cost than you may be used to - imported items like peanut butter, spices, and niche or health food items are expensive or (in the case of some vegan or gluten-free specialty products) nonexistent in Monteverde. You may want to bring these products with you!

Generally, everybody will make their own breakfast as we all rise at different times. Lunch is eaten communally each workday (you can pack a lunch on your days off), and there is a rota for who is in charge of lunch for the day. Dinner is variable - from heating up leftovers to everybody helping to prep a nice dinner at home to the occasional restaurant night out in town.

As the gardens are populated by young adults on an adventure, there are lots of fun nights of cards against humanity, dancing, and drinking. Please be careful about your consumption, especially when



out at the bar. Make sure you can get home safe, are respectful to our neighbors and community, can work the next day, and you **must** be sober during work hours. We also have a young kiddo named Rook who is always at the gardens. We are a true family-run business and our staff's kids are always welcome as well. We ask that you be mindful of their presence during after hours activities. While you will not be required to care for them, we always appreciate people who want to connect and share information and language with our extended work family.

## VI. A Day in the Life

A snapshot of what a day as an MBG intern entails...

Pre-8am	Wake up to the cloud forest bird chorus. Make breakfast and a cup of tea or coffee. Enjoy your meal sitting on the porch overlooking the forest. Make sure your dishes are washed and the kitchen is clean before work begins at 8!
8-9am	Complete your assigned tasks for setting up the gardens and making them ready for visitors - things like cleaning the bathrooms, sweeping the reception area, setting up the insect displays or putting fruit out for the butterflies.
9-10am	If not on tour, work independently or in small groups to do needed facility maintenance work, which varies each day. You may be asked to rake leaves for our compost piles, remove old chrysalides from our chrysalis cases, help to sort the recycling, do pruning in the gardens, or any number of other maintenance jobs.
10-10:15 am	Coffee break! Take <b>fifteen minutes</b> to have a coffee or tea and a snack.
10:15am-12pm	If not on tour, finish off any maintenance tasks still needed and work on learning modules, reading list, projects, etc.
1-1:30pm	<b>Half hour</b> break for lunch (and more coffee).
12:30-4pm	If not on tour, continue learning modules, individual projects or maintenance. We usually accept our last visitors for new tours at 3:30pm.
4-4:30pm	If not on tour, complete assigned facility shutdown tasks if applicable (e.g. providing food for leafcutter ants, securing arachnid enclosures).
4:30-6pm	Relaxing time on the porch, in the kitchen or at a nice location nearby to catch the sunset (season-dependent!). Chat with fellow interns, work on artistic or musical hobbies, play cards, or read a book. We have a rotation for shutting down the butterfly gardens as butterflies like to feed late, so removing the fruit, securing the gardens etc. is done at approx. 5:30pm.
6pm onwards	Cook and eat dinner; other activities vary and are up to the intern group! We do weekly intern meetings and presentation nights, enjoy dinner and drinks at a restaurant, play cards or board games, turn on the moth light and look for nocturnal insects...it all depends on the night!

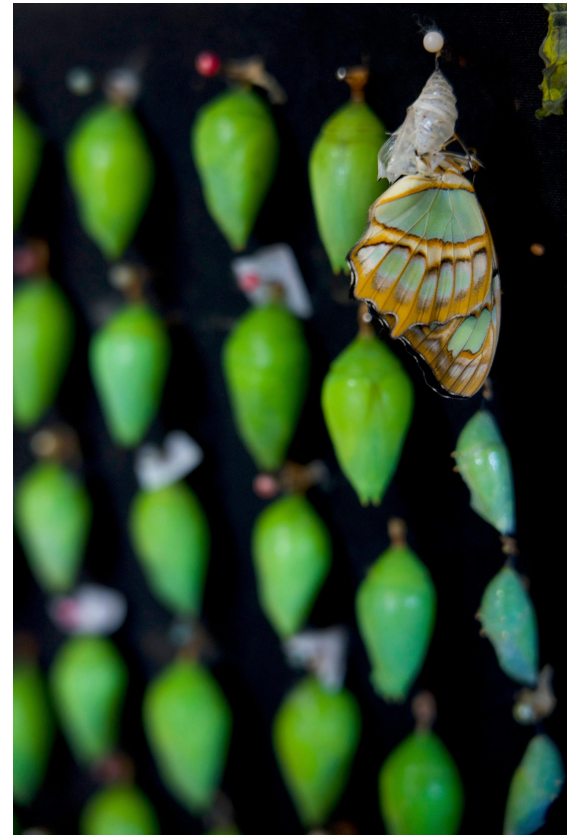


## Section 2: Preparing for the Internship

## VII. Packing List

### Do Bring:

- Copies of your passport, Travel Medical Insurance, travel documents, original covid vaccination card and proof of up to date HepA&B and tetanus vaccines.
- Wristwatch - no exceptions; necessary for keeping track of tour timing!
- Headlamp or flashlight- necessary.
- Several tour-appropriate shirts, shorts and long pants: clean, no rips, no offensive slogans.
- Rain jacket- it can rain any time of the year and when it rains, it *pours*.
- Jacket or sweater- this isn't the beach; it can be cold.
- Good walking shoes- You will be on your feet and hiking a lot! You can get rain boots here cheap if none of ours fit.
- Towel.
- BioDegradable personal hygiene products: you can buy them here as well, but they may be more expensive. Tampons are almost impossible to find and buy in Costa Rica.
- Personal medications: prescription and over the counter alike, we recommend taking anything you think you may need. Malaria medication is not required in Costa Rica. FYI Condoms are expensive, and the morning after pill can be hard to get.
- Water bottle.
- Backpack.
- Pillow: with the humidity, we recommend bringing your own pillow (ours have been through many rainy seasons).
- Sandals (great for when your shoes inevitably get wet!).
- A nice outfit for going out.
- A long-sleeve top for insect and sun protection while traveling outside Monteverde.
- Sunscreen.
- Any instruments or games that you like to play!
- Tea if you are from the UK.



Request from the Director of the MBG: Bryna loves to cook, and would really appreciate that you bring any specialty items from your country that would be fun to share with her!

- North East of North America: Real Maple Syrup, ketchup chips.
- Spain & Italy: Olive oil, smoked paprika.
- UK: Tea, licorice allsorts, Gin, Whiskey.
- Australia: TimTams.

**Don't Bring:**

- Expensive, delicate or humidity sensitive electronics without proper storage, and possibly insurance. Leave your laptop at home unless you really need it.
- Expensive or fancy jewelry, watches, shoes, clothes etc... Everything gets damp here, you will get dirty, and while Monteverde is safe, you don't want to risk something getting stolen.
- Illegal substances.

***A note on workplace appearance:***

*Attire:* We expect our guides to look professional, be able to work, and move freely when giving tours; as such, we request that during work hours you stick to clothes that are clean, free of rips, slogans, and suitable for exploring nature! You don't have to show up head to toe in Khaki, in fact, due to the history of its use by colonizers, we don't encourage it. We encourage you to wear what makes you feel your best while doing tours as long as you can get dirty, run, jump, squat and look put together.

*Hygiene:* We work hard to strike the difficult balance between smelling reasonable, while being environmentally friendly. Please keep clean and respectable, but don't expect to shower every day or do a lot of laundry! Water is expensive and a valuable resource so we need everyone to help conserve it.

*Body Modifications:* People can be judgmental of tattoos and piercings, so we try to limit the distraction that they can make from our goal of sharing bugs with people. That being said, all our staff have them, our general manager (GM) is even a qualified piercer! If you have any potentially offensive or controversial tattoos we ask that you keep them covered. We want people to think that their idea of "normal" people can like bugs too!



## VIII. Pre-Arrival Readings

Interns occasionally ask us for pre-arrival reading recommendations to get them prepared for Costa Rica, the Neotropics, and their internship. If you read one book before you come, make it **Tropical Nature** by Adrian Forsyth and Ken Miyata. It's a highly readable introduction to Central and South American ecology, and is written as a popular nonfiction book rather than a textbook. It can be difficult to find as a physical copy, but the eBook is readily available. If you can't spend the money, don't stress - we have several copies on our bookshelf waiting for you to dig into during your stay!

Upon acceptance to our intern program, we will also share with you a Google Drive folder of materials and resources on local natural history topics. These are high-quality documents and slideshows made by past and current interns and staff on subjects ranging from plant families to stingless bees. You're welcome to browse these before you arrive if you're curious about some of the things you'll be observing and learning about! These documents are however our work product and we ask that you do not share them with others without asking us first.

## IX. Getting to MBG

When you fly into Costa Rica, you'll receive a 90 day tourist visa in your passport (though check online for current regulations specific to your country). They will ask for proof of onward travel, so have a return or onward flight confirmation at the ready. This can be a real flight booked back, or if you are unsure of your plans, there are sites that allow you to reserve a flight for 24 hours without paying and then it is automatically canceled, such as American Airlines or Onwardtravel. These send you booking confirmations that you can show to immigration, even if you have not paid for the flight.

Depending on our availability and your flight time, we can come to pick you up at either airport, we ask that you cover the gas, about \$50 round trip (8h total) and if you arrive after 4pm, that you give your driver \$20 or so for driving up at night.

If flying into San Jose, you arrive at the international airport in Alajuela. You may wish to stay the night in the city before making the journey up to Monteverde. Either way, you will need to get to the city center from the airport, which can be done via airport shuttle (usually pre-arranged with your hostel or hotel), Uber, taxi, or public bus. If opting for a taxi, make sure you catch an official taxi - these are coloured orange-red with a yellow triangle on the side of the car. Unofficial taxis abound, but are less

safe and charge higher rates. Agree on the rate before getting in or ensure the taxi is using the meter. Uber is your best bet for not getting ripped off.

If you are able to get to the Monteverde bus station (see below) by 2:30pm on your day of arrival, you can choose to come straight up the mountain. However, if spending the night, you have a wealth of hotel and hostel options in San Jose. Those recommended by past interns include the following:

- Stray Cat Hostel (hostel): <https://straycathostel.com/>
- Casa Colon (hostel): <http://www.hostelcasacolon.com/>
- Hostal Casa Del Parque (hostel): <https://www.hostelcasadelparque.com/>

### *San Jose to Monteverde*

There are two main ways to get to Monteverde from San Jose: public bus or Interbus.

The public bus leaves from the 7/10 station close to the center of San Jose. We recommend taking a taxi or Uber to the station, as it is located in a rougher neighborhood and it's best not to risk your valuables. The buses leave at around 6:00 am and 2:30 pm and cost around \$7. Check the Transmonteverde website (<https://www.transmonteverde.com/>) for up-to-date information. Robberies are not commonplace, but regardless, watch your bags. You can put larger bags under the bus, but keep any valuables with you. The bus journey is approx. five hours and the scenery is lovely! Once you arrive in Monteverde, you can walk (about 25-30 minutes) or get a taxi to the Jardin de Mariposas (taxi drivers call it the *mariposario*). A taxi should be about \$4 - note that rates are more or less set and no drivers in Monteverde use a meter. It may be worth the price on your first night here - the hills are steep even when you don't have luggage!

Your second option to get here is by Interbus. This is a private company that offers a shuttle service from your accommodation in San Jose and can drop you directly to the MBG. The Interbus is more expensive - about \$65 for door-to-door - but more convenient. You can book online at <https://www.interbusonline.com/>.

### *Liberia to Monteverde*

You can also fly into LIR, in the north west of the country, a much smaller airport, it's a breeze to navigate. However, it is more difficult to find accommodation and transport to Monteverde. You have to take 2 buses, there are not as many shuttles and finding a reasonably priced, safe hostel is a challenge. If you are an experienced traveler, go for it! Otherwise, we recommend having us come get you directly from the airport.

## **X. Financials**

You pay **no fees** to intern at the MBG. We provide:

- On-site accommodation (see above for details).
- Basic food, tea and coffee.

We **do not** cover:

- Plane tickets to or from Costa Rica.
- Entry or exit fees.
- Travel insurance.
- Medical expenses.
- Activities and additional travel.
- Border hop costs (if applicable - you will not need to border hop for the 10 week internship, only if you wish to stay in the country more than 90 days!).
- etc...

Depending on your personal spending, how many tourist things you want to do, how much time you spend at the bar, and how much you make in tips, interns spend anywhere from a couple hundred dollars, to much more during their time here.

If you would like to see other parts of the country, after your internship we can help you book and plan the best options, or ask Bryna and Roy about the 2-4 day itineraries they designed to take up to 2 interns at a time on wildlife adventures.

## **XI. Contact and apply**

To apply, send an email to the Intern Coordinator including a resume/CV and a cover letter telling us why you want to volunteer at the MBG, why you would make a great volunteer, and what your personal goals are.

We have openings year round! If you have any further questions, contact the Intern Coordinator on:

**Whatsapp: 001 506 2645-5512** or **Email: [monteverdebutterflygardens@gmail.com](mailto:monteverdebutterflygardens@gmail.com)**