



JARDIN DE MARIPOSAS
MONTEVERDE
BUTTERFLY GARDENS

Internship Information Package





Here at the Monteverde Butterfly Gardens (or, as we like to call them around here, the MBG), we have been teaching people about Costa Rica's insects and arachnids for over 20 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!

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Section 1: What to Expect



Purpose of the Internship

Our internships are a ten-week program primarily designed for people looking to improve their science communication and natural 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!

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 less 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 labour, 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 an off-grid, sustainable facility!

Finally, when you have completed the modules and associated quizzes involved in the internship

(often around Week 6), you will be tasked with completing 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:

- Comfort with public speaking;
- Comfort handling insects and arachnids or willingness to learn;
- Willingness to lead 1-4 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;
- Acceptance of evolutionary theory (you will be discussing it on tours!);
- Proof of travel insurance and tetanus vaccination details.

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 maintenance of the gardens and living space including weeding, potting plants, shovelling dirt and soil bags, larvae collection, aphid control, caring for our pigs, etc.;
- Cooking meals and cleaning the kitchen after meals;
- Working through learning modules including completing readings, 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.

Work Schedule

On work days, you are expected to start work at 7:45am. You will generally finish by 5-5:30pm (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 7:45am if you are not planning to eat in town. It also means you will not have access to our wifi network on off days. 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 centre 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 travelling 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!



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 either the casita kitchen or main kitchen at the gardens, so all cooking is done on the stovetop. The casita is off-grid: it has no internet or electricity, and has an ice cooler but no fridge. 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 off-grid, so electronics are charged when there is sunlight only (as we run on solar power) in the kitchen.

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 - usually impossible on the MBG wifi!).

As we are predominantly an off-grid facility and strive to be as eco-friendly as possible, we expect our interns to act in an environmentally-conscious manner while here. Our facilities run on solar power, and we occasionally run out of power in the evenings (which means cooking over small



solar lights and no internet). To save power, we ask interns to charge any electronics in the morning to early afternoon, and we unplug any electronics still charging after 3pm. We also ask you to be meticulous about turning lights off when you leave a room and minimising 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. Laundry is done by hand; we have a laundry bucket for you to use and we can teach you if you've never washed clothes by hand before (it's easy!). There is a washing machine up at the owners' house and you can choose to have your clothes washed and dried there for \$5 (to cover water and electricity), though we'll do your first load for free.



Meals:

We provide basic food for you to make meals: rice and beans, pasta, oats, wheat and corn flour, fresh fruit and vegetables, coffee and tea, etc. 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, 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, tampons, 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!

On that note, if you are from northeastern North America, we (Bryna and David, the owners) beg you to please bring down a plastic jug of real dark maple syrup for us to buy from you

when you arrive! We cannot get maple syrup here, so will jump at the chance to buy a jug from 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). 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.

Lastly, there are no specific rules about alcohol so long as you stay sober during work hours and are well-behaved. Of note, our 17 year old son Eli is often at the gardens. Please be mindful of your behaviour around him inside and outside of work hours (i.e. don't get him drunk!). We also have a toddler son Rook who frequently accompanies us to the gardens. We are a true family-run business and our staff's kids are always welcome as well. While you will not be required to care for them, we always appreciate people who are willing to connect and share information and language with our extended work family.



A Day in the Life...

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

Pre-7:45am	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 7:45!
7:45-8:30am	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.
8:30-10am	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.
10-10:15am	Coffee break! Take fifteen minutes 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.
12:30-1pm	Half hour break for lunch (and more coffee).
12:30-4pm	If not on tour, continue learning modules, individual projects and working through the internship program. We usually accept our last visitors for new tours at 4pm.
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!

Packing List

Required:

- Wristwatch (no exceptions; necessary for keeping track of tour timing!)
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Several tour-appropriate shirts and full-length pants
- 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 gets cold!!)
- Boots or shoes for hiking
- Towel
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Personal medications (contraceptives are difficult and expensive to purchase here and the morning after pill is not available; malaria medication is not required in Costa Rica)
- Water bottle
- Backpack
- Pillow (we have a few emergency spares, but they've seen several rainy seasons and are not in the best shape!)

Recommended:

- Sandals (great for when your shoes inevitably get wet!)
- A nice outfit for going out
- A long-sleeve top for insect protection while travelling outside Monteverde
- Camera and batteries
- Sunscreen
- Any instruments or games that you like to play!

Not required:

- Rubber boots (we have lots you can borrow for muddy work)
- Binoculars (unless you have a beloved pair of expensive binos - we have plenty of 8x42s that you can borrow)
- Linens (we have bedding!)

Section 2: Get Prepared!

A note on tour attire...

We expect our guides to look professional when giving tours. As such, we request that during work hours you stick to clothes that a nature guide might wear. If you must wear shorts, they should be close to knee length (though we prefer our guides to wear pants on work days). T-shirts are okay, but parachute pants, singlets and belly shirts, for example, are not. If you want to bring these, they should be only for off days!

We work hard to strike the difficult balance between looking professional while being environmentally friendly. Please keep clean and respectable, but don't expect to shower every day! Water is expensive and a very valuable resource so we need everyone to help conserve it.

We also ask that you try to minimise the display of body modification. While we all have tattoos and are not against them at all, we take lots of old grumpy people around the gardens, as well as families with young children. The more 'normal' we look, the better these people can relate to us and the more effective our communication is. If you have lots of tattoos, especially non-nature ones, please pack clothes that cover them as much as possible. Likewise, if you have facial piercings, please bring jewelry that is as neutral as possible. Having lots of bling on your face can be distracting as it moves while you talk and takes away from our message.

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!



Getting to MBG

ONE: NAVIGATING SAN JOSE

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).

Volunteering on a tourist visa is completely legal and very common here, so you will have no problems telling immigration exactly where you're headed. They may 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. You can also book a Ticabus ticket to Nicaragua or Panama

and change your dates later.

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 centre 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.

Depending on flight duration and arrival time, you may or may not wish to spend the night in San Jose on arrival. 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 and skip spending a night in the city. However, if spending the night, you have a wealth of hotel and hostel options in San Jose. Those recommended by past interns include

La Riviera (hotel, offers airport pickup):

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

Stray Cat Hostel (hostel): <https://straycathostel.com/>

Casa Colon (hostel): <http://www.hostelcasacolon.com/>

Hostal Casa Del Parque (hostel):

<https://www.hostelcasadelparque.com/>



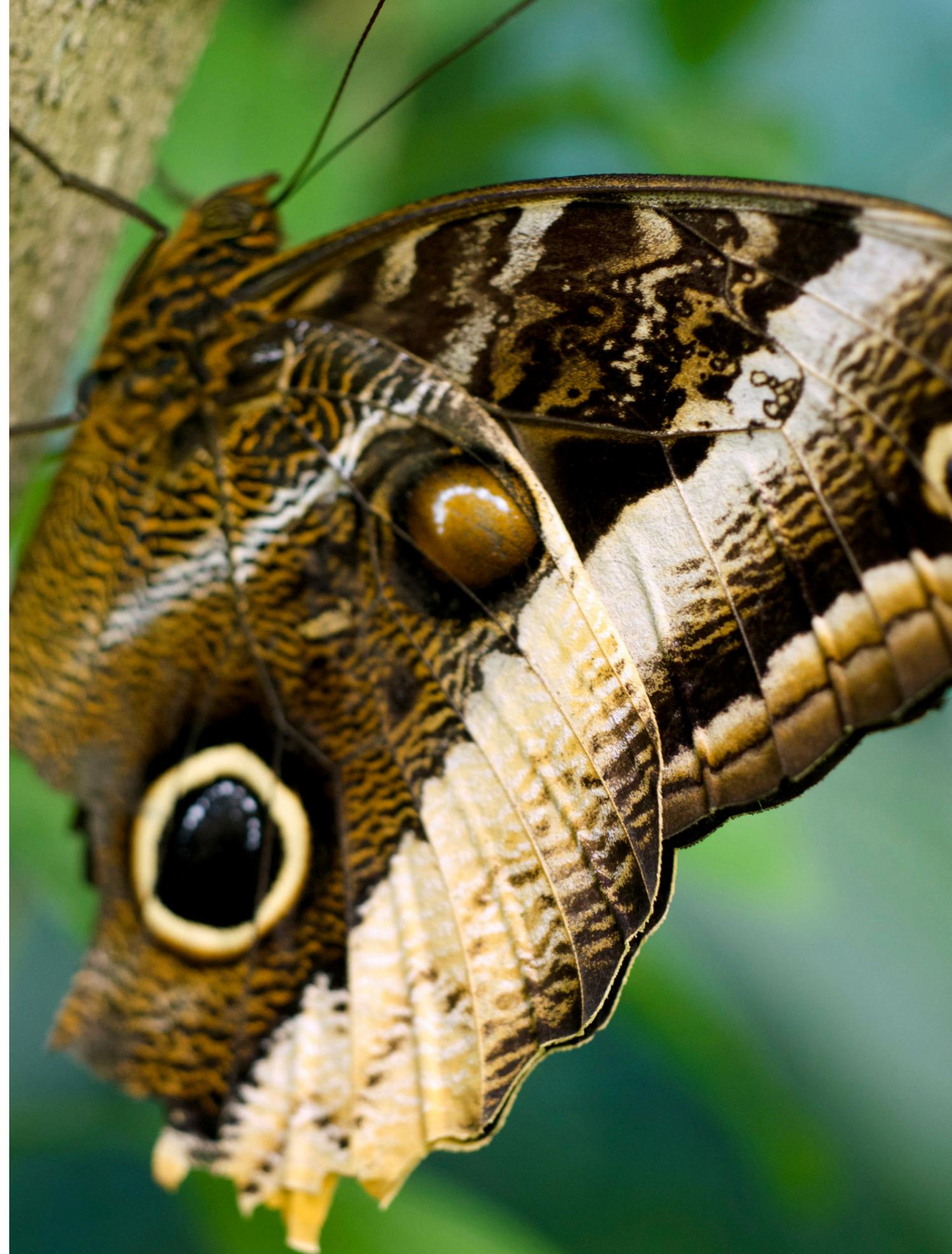
TWO: SAN JOSE TO MONTEVERDE

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 centre of San Jose. We recommend taking a taxi or Uber to the station, as it is located in a rougher neighbourhood and it's best not to risk your valuables. The buses leave at around 6:00am and 2:30pm 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 \$55 for door-to-door - but more convenient. You can book online at <https://www.interbusonline.com/>.



Financials

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

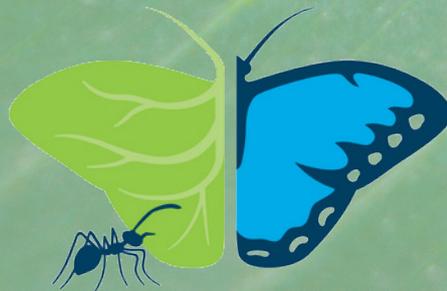
- On-site accommodation (see above for details)
- Basic food, tea and coffee

We do not cover:

- Plane tickets to or from Costa Rica
- Entry or exit fees
- Travel insurance
- 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!)

Contact

If you have any further questions, please contact Bryna at monteverdebutterflygardens@gmail.com. She can help you with specific enquiries or put you in touch with our Intern Coordinator or past interns.



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