

Costa Rica Workshop - Suggested Clothing

We've had quite a few questions about what to wear to CR, so I wanted to put together a quick article with some suggestions.

First, if you've ever seen me, you know that I'm about as fashionable as a potato, so we'll limit this discussion to the types of clothing that work well. I'll leave color and style to you :)

Also, keep in mind that CR is hot with high humidity and any kind of breeze is rare. I'm not saying it's unbearable, but the last time I was down I did see a couple of hobbits looking for a place to toss a ring...

So with that in mind and starting from the top down, let's look at some recommended clothing.

Headware -

To begin, I'd highly recommend a light hat of some sort - like a lightweight ball cap (that's what I use).

Stick with a thin, synthetic material, avoid heavy cotton at all costs. You want something that dries quickly - a heavy, cotton-based hat will get wet the first day and stay that way for the rest of the trip.

Oh, the reasons for the hat are twofold. First, if it's raining it keeps the water out of your eyes. Second, bugs sometimes fall from the trees - need I say more?

Shirts

Moving down a bit, let's talk shirts. As with hats, avoid cotton (or at least 100% cotton). Nike Dri-Fit style shirts are the best. Nike, Champion (I think they call theirs "Vapor") and Eddie Bauer are all brands that I have used and like.

The key is you want a synthetic, lightweight shirt that will dry quickly (you'll find that's kind of a theme as we go on). Columbia also makes a really nice button down shirt that works well (actually, the resort even sells them).

In any event, [here's the type of shirt](#) I like. That's the men's version, but it gives you the idea.

Also, if just the thought of a sunny day causes your skin to burn or if you are planning to go out fishing on a non-workshop / optional day, I highly recommend the long-sleeve version of the dri-fit type shirts. They are still very comfortable and will help keep the sun off of your arms. Always a good idea to pack at least one. (Plus, they can help keep mosquitoes off as well.)

I don't burn easily, so while out and about doing photography I go short sleeve, but if you burn easily, long sleeve isn't a bad idea.

Pants

Moving down the torso, we come to pants. Again, 100% cotton is not your friend. Stick with fast drying synthetics here as well.

Although I bring along a lightweight pair of long pants, I never seem to touch them. I wear shorts the entire time, and I noticed that the guides and everyone else do as well.

That said, we have found that some of our participants prefer to have pants to keep the sun and any mosquitoes at bay. So, it may not be a bad idea to bring along a couple lightweight pairs of pants (again, synthetic, not cotton).

There are a wide variety of options, but anything fast drying will work fine. Nike makes dri-fit style shorts and Columbia makes lightweight, fast drying synthetic shorts as well. In fact, the Columbia ones are my favorites - better pockets than the Nike shorts.

Something [like this works well](#). Again, that's just to point you in the right direction, no need to buy that exact pair.

Speaking of pockets, make sure you have ample pocket space for things like extra batteries, lens caps, extra cards, etc.

Shoes

When we're at the resort, you can usually get away with sandals if you like (just don't step on the fire ant mounds). I occasionally wear sandals around the resort, especially in the evening after I'm done shooting for the day.

However, when we're out shooting, you'll need a good, lightweight pair of hiking shoes or boots. (This includes any night shoots at the resort.) I know it's hot, but sandals just aren't a good idea when we're out and about. Too many things to step in, too many things that want to bite your foot.

Waterproof hiking shoes are ideal, but non-waterproof can work as well. However, keep in mind that it's not uncommon to end up walking through puddles and such. Waterproof makes this much more comfortable.

Once again, ideally choose hiking shoes that are low on cotton and high on breathable synthetic materials. That way, if they do get wet, they dry quickly.

It's also not a bad idea to have a backup pair of hiking shoes along in case the first pair gets wet. That happened to me on the last trip. Due to a foot injury I was nursing at the time, I only had one pair of hiking shoes that I could comfortably wear. Well, there was an opportunity that I needed to get into a stream for, and I never thought about how hard it would be to dry the shoes (well, that and I misjudged the depth)! The upshot is that I ended up slogging around in soggy hiking shoes for a day or two (It finally occurred to me to use the air conditioner fan outside the building to dry them out).

In addition, I recommend lightweight, synthetic, fast drying ankle / crew socks.

Undergarments

I hate to mention the unmentionables, but here goes.

Once again, and ideally, stay away from cotton. Trust me, there's nothing fun about walking around half the day with sweat-soaked undies. Enough said.

Raincoats

I also recommend grabbing the lightest raincoat you can find. It's the rainforest and all, so scattered showers are pretty much par for the course. While we will wait out the downpours, if light rain is falling and we have a good subject, we'll be out shooting.

So, you'll want a raincoat along, but you'll want the lightest one you can find. (although, it's usually so hot that even if I get caught in the rain, I don't mind skipping the raincoat LOL)

Quantities

You may have noticed a few of the subtle hints I've been tossing out regarding the temps and humidity down in CR. Not surprisingly, you will sweat through a LOT of clothing, so you'll need more than you think - especially shirts.

Thankfully, the types of lightweight, synthetic materials we'll be wearing are also very packable, so at least there's that. However, it's not uncommon to go through a few shirts every day (I usually go through two each day).

Worst case scenario, if you do run low on clothing or you simply don't have the room to pack it, the resort does offer a laundry service. They do an incredible job, but it's not cheap. I don't know the exact pricing, but when we had our laundry done mid-week (figure about a load or so I guess), it was about \$100. Still, it's nice to have the option.

(I guess you can also put a little detergent in the sink and hand wash, but you didn't hear it from me.)

Other Stuff

I know this isn't technically clothing, but I also recommend taking along sunblock and bug spray (get the pump-style - NOT the aerosol cans).

If you burn easily, you'll want to apply sunscreen each day. I don't burn that quickly, so I don't tend to use any sunscreen on the photo shoots.

However, we did go fishing one day and WOW - I quickly discovered that the rumors about the sun being more intense at the equator were true. Despite applying a bucket of sunscreen, I was still a bit red the next day. So, sunscreen is good to have along. Again, the resort does sell it, but it's priced like liquid gold.

As for bug spray, I'd recommend having it along, but you may not need it. However, some trips are worse than others for bugs. On my first trip, we only use bug spray once. However, on subsequent trips I have needed it from time to time. So, I'd have a bottle along, you never know what the conditions will be like.

Summary

OK, I think that covers it. The main thing is NO COTTON! Cotton absorbs moisture and you'll be soaked in less than 30 minutes - and get to stay that way all day. Go for lightweight, fast drying synthetics and you'll be much happier.