

Costa Rica Vaccine Requirements and FAQs

For volunteers to participate in our Expedition programme we require them to have a minimum level of vaccinations. This is for many reasons, the most pertinent is that Raleigh’s safety guidelines are governed global health standards. Due to the nature, duration, and predominantly rural location of our projects on Expedition, Raleigh volunteers are considered to be at higher risk of certain infections and diseases than regular tourists and therefore we ask for additional vaccines than your travel clinic or Medical Doctor may recommend.

A quick reference guide and checklist

Vaccine	What you need to get	Completed
COVID-19	Full course as per the manufacturer's recommendation i.e. AstraZeneca two doses, Johnson&Johnson one dose.	
Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Polio	Primary course in childhood and a booster in the last 10 years	
Measles, Mumps, and Rubella	Two vaccines one month apart	
Typhoid	One injection which lasts for three years	
Hepatitis A	One vaccine valid for one year or second vaccine after 6months for 25 years protection	
Hepatitis B	Three doses over one month before the Expedition and a final dose after 6months for lifelong travel cover	
Dental check up	A check up in the last 6months before departure for Expedition	

COVID-19

Why do I need this one?

To protect those we work with in the remote rural communities of Costa Rica, our staff, and each other.

What is required?

You need to have two doses of either Astra Zeneca, Pfizer or the Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The Sputnik vaccine has been discredited by the World Health Organisation; therefore Raleigh Costa Rica do not consider those who have had it as being vaccinated.



Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio

Why do I need this one?

Tetanus is a life-threatening condition which occurs from Tetanus toxin produced by the bacteria called Clostridium Tetani. The bacteria are present in the soil and manure and enters the body through wounds, burns and other breaks in the skin which could easily go unnoticed. Given the environments our volunteers will be working in and challenges of getting the treatment after the fact.

As this is manufactured as a combined vaccine you also get the benefit of Diphtheria and Polio. Polio is eradicated in all the countries we work in, and Diphtheria is of very low incidence therefore is not the primary reason for this vaccine.

What is required?

This vaccine is a combined vaccine with three in one, often given as part of the childhood vaccine schedule. It consists of a primary course of three doses of vaccine at specific intervals then booster doses every 10 years.

To be safely protected against tetanus for Expedition you will need to have completed a primary course and if the last dose of that course is more than 10 years ago you will need to have a booster.

Measles, Mumps, and Rubella

Why do I need this one?

Measles is a highly infectious disease spread by respiratory droplets causing cold like symptoms and later a rash. It can be fatal to vulnerable people or those with underlying health conditions. Because there is a relatively high incidence of Measles in the countries we work in Raleigh wants to ensure the safety of all its volunteers by protecting them from this dangerous disease.

As this is manufactured as a combined vaccine you also get the benefit of Mumps and Rubella, they are not our primary focus as the incidence in the countries we work in is very low and they are not as contagious.



What is required?

This is also part of the childhood vaccine schedule and has been since 1978. As it is a live vaccine if you have had it once you should be covered for life. However, if you are unsure, you can safely have the vaccine again, but we recommend checking with the clinic that has your vaccination history first.

If you haven't previously had the vaccine or can't check, you will need two doses of vaccine at specific intervals to ensure full coverage.

Typhoid

Why do I need this one?

Typhoid is a bacterial spread through contaminated food and water. Although we purify all the water volunteers drink and ensure food is cooked and prepared to our high standards there is some element of risk we cannot mitigate. It is also possible to contract Typhoid from close contact with those who have the disease or are carriers but do not show symptoms. Typhoid will cause a Fever, Diarrhoea and Vomiting and there are only supportive measures to treat it.

What is required?

One vaccine which is effective for three years, if you have had this in the three years before the Expedition you will be adequately covered. If you had a dose more than three years ago or have never had this vaccine you will need a single vaccine.

Hepatitis A

Why do I need this one?

Hepatitis A is a virus which similarly to Typhoid is spread through contaminated food and water, it is common in the countries we work in. It is also possible to contract Hepatitis A from close contact with those who are infected. Although we purify all the water volunteers drink and ensure food is cooked and prepared to our high standards there is some element of risk we cannot mitigate. Hepatitis A will affect the liver and is very difficult to treat, it can go undetected for up to a month and some people may never experience the initial symptoms.



What is required?

The vaccine is effective for one year if you have just one dose. If you have a previously had a vaccine more than a year ago or have never had one you will need to have one for the Expedition. If this vaccine/booster is a second dose any time more than 6 months after the first it will be effective for 25 years.

Hepatitis B

Why do I need this one?

Hepatitis B is a virus which is spread through blood and bodily fluids i.e. sharing razors without proper sterilisation, tattoos and unprotected sex, etc. It is now part of the childhood vaccine schedule and Raleigh requires volunteers to be up to date with the vaccine schedule in the UK as well as getting the specific vaccines for each country they are travelling to. However, it is also relevant to the countries we work in; in case of an emergency where a volunteer may require a blood transfusion it is not always possible to ensure the blood has been as thoroughly screened as it is in the UK. Raleigh does everything possible to mitigate the risks within our control to ensure there will not be such emergency situations, but we prefer to be prepared. Those who become infected with Hepatitis B may not notice symptoms for several years but the long-term problems centre around liver damage.

What is required?

This vaccine is a course of three at specific intervals to provide lifetime cover. There are two different schedules used in the UK; the standard schedule and the rapid schedule. We strongly recommend the standard schedule as this provides the most effective immunity after vaccination.

The standard schedule is dose one then one month later a second dose and the third dose at six months (i.e. 0, 1 and 6 months). It is possible to travel after the second dose as this will provide enough immunity for the duration of the Expedition so long as the last dose is completed at month six after the Expedition to give the final boost.

The rapid schedule involves four doses. Dose one then seven days later dose two, then twenty-one days later the third dose. Finally dose four will be at six months later to give the final boost. This will be like the standard schedule where you can have the initial three doses before Expedition and have the final one on return at six months (i.e. Day 0, 7, 28 and month 6).



We recommend you discuss this vaccine, if you haven't previously had a full course, with your travel clinic or health professional. There are many different manufacturers of the Hepatitis B vaccine, and each will have some variables and potentially different schedules.

Insect bite prevention

What does this mean?

As there is a high risk of insect bites i.e. mosquitoes, some of these carry diseases which there is no cure or vaccine for i.e. Dengue fever and Zika. Throughout the Expedition we actively encourage prevention measures to reduce the risk of being bitten and the irritating side effects of itchiness, swelling, pain and possible infections. These measures include:

1. Wearing loose long sleeves and trousers with socks and shoes when biting insects are most active.
2. Using 50% DEET insect repellent on top of sunscreen on exposed skin throughout the day and night.
3. Sleeping under a Mosquito net (impregnated with Permethrin) which is tucked under the mattress to keep out the biting insects.

What do I need to do?

You need to follow the above three steps to prevent getting insect bites as much as possible.

What do I need to bring?

- Plenty of loose-fitting clothes with long sleeves and full-length trousers, socks, and closed toe shoes.
- Enough 50% DEET insect repellent to last the whole of your Expedition, discuss this with your travel clinic or pharmacy as it depends on the type of spray bottle how much you will need.
- A box shaped Mosquito net.



Dental care

What do you mean by this?

Most insurance does not cover dental care. You must have had a dental check-up within 6 months prior to joining the Expedition to ensure there are no avoidable dental problems during your time volunteering with us.

