

What is Ostional ?

Ostional is the name of a community, beach, and a national wildlife refuge (Refugio Nacional Vida Silvestre Ostional.) The refuge is located 360km from San Jose, the capital, on the Nicoya Peninsula, Santa Cruz, Guanacaste.

When do sea turtles arrive at Ostional ?

Sea turtles arrive at Ostional to lay eggs almost every night. However, the number of arrivals is cyclical peaking at the arribada, and dropping off to almost nothing on the days midway between arribadas.

What is an "Arribada" or "Flota" ?

"Arribada", or sometimes called "Flota", is a synchronized mass nesting in which hundreds to thousands of Olive Ridley Sea Turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) arrive at the beach on the same day. During arribada, there are so many turtle tracks on the beach that it is impossible to distinguish one set of tracks from the other.

When do the arribadas or flotas occur? At night or in the daytime ?

Arribadas occur each month, always associated with a certain phase of the moon, and are more predictable in the wet season. The majority of arribadas occur during the last quarter of the moon. Sea turtles generally land at night, but during huge arribadas in the wet season, turtles may arrive from around 2



o'clock in the afternoon until 7 in the morning the next day

When are the hatchlings born ?

Hatchlings are born 40-50 days after the eggs are laid in the dry season, and 45-55 days after laid in the wet season. The hatchlings head to the sea together and leave many tracks on the beach after emerging from the nest. Only hatchlings that escape predation from many animals and birds will reach the water. Turtles hatch for about as many days as the corresponding arribada lasted.



Project for rational use, conservation, and management of turtle eggs.

With the goal of making rational use of this resource, the community has organized itself forming the Association for Integrated Development Ostional (ADIO.) This organization promotes the development of community services through alternative economic scheme.

The conservation plan, supervised by MINAE and INCOPECA, is intended to guarantee continued sustainable use of this resource. In each arribada, 70%-90% of eggs are lost through: destruction of nests by the other turtles, contamination of the sand with microorganisms, predation and erosion of the beach. From each arribada, around 1% of the eggs are harvested and sold for the economic support of the families in the community.

- Only ADIO members are permitted to harvest eggs
- The time of harvest is limited to 36 hours from



the beginning of arribada.

- To harvest eggs laid solitary is prohibited. It is presumed that those eggs are more important to sustain the population of turtles and they have a higher probability of the birth.

Commercialization of the turtle eggs.

Once the eggs are collected, they are packed in plastic bags marked with the ADIO logo (see cover page.) These eggs are sold nationally and can be purchased at supermarkets, restaurants, and other businesses in Costa Rica.



Distribution of profits from the sales of eggs.

70 % of the profits from the sale of eggs are distributed to the ADIO members (218 persons in 2002) and the other 30% are spent on operating expenses, scientific research, grants for students in the community, environmental education, community events, sports, primary schools, and other community activities.

Getting to Ostional

There are two main routes to visit Ostional, from Santa Cruz (2 and a half hours) and from Nosara (25 minutes.) If you drive, 4WD cars are recommended in the wet season. There is a public buss from Santa Cruz at 12:30 p.m. and it returns from Ostional at 5:00 a.m. the next day. From Nosara, only taxi service is available.

Accommodations and meals in Ostional

There are various cabins and rooms for rent in the area. Also, a camping area with sanitary services is available. For food service, there are sodas and restaurants, and meals may be available in some houses. You can also buy some foods in the small shops (pulperias).

Other things to see in Ostional

Beside the wildlife refuge, it is possible to observe birds and howler monkeys very near town. Various animals, such as raccoons and skunks, are often observed at night. Crocodiles, iguanas, and aquatic birds live in the estuaries near the beach. To the north of refuge are rock formations including a cave with a large bat colony.



Regulations to visitors

Tourists who enter the beach to observe the arribadas or the birth of hatchlings must follow these regulations:

- Pay the entrance fee to the beach
- Do not use a strong light (cover your flashlight with red cellophane paper)
- Do not shine light directly at the turtles' eyes
- No flash photography (various photos, slides, and post cards are sold at the ADIO office)
- Do not move any signs or markers on the beach: they are used in ongoing scientific sea turtle research
- Divide large groups into subgroups of 8 persons accompanied by an authorized local guide
- Vehicles, camping, and campfires are prohibited on the beach
- For the best experience, we recommend you take a tour with an authorized local guide

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IMPRESSION : ADIO

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