

# Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a paradise for nature-lovers, and its size belies the amazing variety of ecosystems found within its borders. There are tropical beaches, humid rainforests, fiery volcanic peaks, steaming hot springs and mossy cloud forests which are home to a huge array of birds and mammals. Adventurous travellers will also love the range of activities on offer, with rafting, trekking, horseback riding and mountain biking available countrywide from the Pacific coast to the Caribbean. The country is justifiably famous for its fine coffee, best enjoyed in a hammock on one of the secluded beaches or fresh from the plantation itself. The Ticos, as Costa Ricans are commonly known, are famous for their hospitality and are keen to make your stay a memorable one.



Poás Volcans



## San José & the Central Valley

Costa Rica's capital city is surrounded by heavily forested mountains and verdant coffee plantations, whilst the national parks of the Central Valley protect the main volcanoes of the region which are recognised havens for a vast array of bird and plant life.

## Tortuguero

Set on the northern Caribbean coast, Tortuguero is a major breeding ground for green turtles, which can be seen nesting on the beaches year-round. The river channels of the coastal floodplain can be explored by boat or canoe, and the lagoons are home to a variety of birds.

## Monteverde

Monteverde was founded by Quaker farmers in the 1950s and is well-known for its quality cheeses. A network of trails in the surrounding cloud forest allows visitors to discover the many species of mammals, butterflies and plants which are unique to the area.

## The Pacific Coast

Costa Rica's west coast has stunning beaches backed by thick coastal rainforest, and as well as the opportunity to relax on the peaceful sands, many other activities are on offer, such as horseback riding, kayaking and hiking.

## Costa Rica Travel Tips

- **Time:** GMT -6
- **Flying Time from UK:** Approx. 14 hours.
- **Language:** Spanish is the official language, but English is widely spoken in the larger hotels and tourist areas.
- **Currency:** The Costa Rican Colon (CRC) £1 = CRC1016 approximately.
- **Visa Requirements:** A visa is not required by UK citizens for tourist stays of up to three months.
- **Festivals, Events & Busy Times:** There are numerous local events and national holidays. The major holidays are Easter (the 'Semana Santa', the week leading up to Easter Sunday) and Christmas, when hotels can be busy.
- **Departure tax:** US\$26 from San Jose and US\$17 from Liberia for international departures, US\$3 for domestic departures. Subject to change. Purchase prior to check-in required.
- **Tourist Office:** For further tourist information please see the website [www.visitcostarica.com](http://www.visitcostarica.com). For more useful information, see pages 96-97.

## Arenal

The Arenal is the most active volcano in the country. With lush vegetation on one side, and rugged lava tracts on the other, it is a fascinating place to explore, and the regular eruptions light up the night sky. The region is well-known for its hot springs, surrounded by tropical forest.

## The Osa Peninsula & Corcovado

The tropical Osa Peninsula jutting out from the southern Pacific coast, is the country's wildest and most spectacular region featuring great wildlife, deserted beaches and virgin forests. It is home to Corcovado National Park, where many endangered animals and plant species still thrive.

# Tours for Independent Travellers

## Essential Costa Rica

10 Days from £819 (includes domestic flights)

### Highlights Include

- See the crystal clear crater lake of the Poás Volcano
- Watch turtles nesting on the beaches of Tortuguero
- Enjoy a natural fireworks show at the active Arenal Volcano
- Look out for the colourful Quetzal bird in the cloud forests of Monteverde

### Departures: Daily

#### Day 1: Arrive San José

On arrival in San José, you will be met and transferred to your chosen hotel for a two-night stay.

Standard: Hotel Parque del Lago

Deluxe: Real Intercontinental Costa Rica

#### Day 2: Volcanoes & Waterfalls

Today you will enjoy a tour of Poás Volcano and the La Paz Waterfall Gardens. After a traditional Costa Rican breakfast, you will visit a coffee plantation and then continue to the active volcano which has a steaming crater and crystal blue sulphur pools and is surrounded by lush vegetation. Continue to La Paz for a guided walk along its trails and a tour of the butterfly observatory and hummingbird garden. Enjoy a wonderful buffet lunch before returning to San José. (BL)

#### Day 3: San José – Tortuguero

You will leave your hotel early this morning and have breakfast en route to the primary forests of Braulio Carrillo National Park. After visiting a banana plantation, you will then transfer onto a boat for a ride through the beautiful Tortuguero canals before arriving at your chosen lodge. After lunch and a refreshing cocktail, you will have a tour of the town, museum and there will be a short stop at the beach before returning to the lodge for dinner and a two-night stay. (BLD)

Standard: Mawamba Lodge

Deluxe: Pachira Lodge

#### Day 4: Tortuguero

A full day at leisure to explore the trails surrounding your lodge, or to take optional excursions, including a sunrise boat ride and wildlife exploration tour through the forest and along the scenic waterways which are home to over 60 mammal and 300 bird species. After dinner at the



lodge, you can walk along the beach and, in season (July to September), see the green turtles nesting. (BLD)

#### Day 5: Tortuguero – Arenal

This morning you will have an early boat transfer to Tortuguero airstrip for a flight to San José (included) and a three hour private transfer with an English-speaking driver to Arenal, one of Costa Rica's main attractions. The Arenal volcano is very active and on clear nights provides a spectacular light show. On arrival, check into your hotel for a two night stay. (B)

Standard: Arenal Paraiso

Deluxe: Arenal Kioro

#### Day 6: Arenal

Today you will have a full day at leisure to enjoy the area and the optional activities available in the Arenal region, which include hikes to the volcano, canopy tours, mountain biking, horse riding to La Fortuna waterfall or a visit to the local hot springs at Tabacón. (B)

#### Day 7: Arenal – Monteverde

Travel by boat on Lake Arenal to Rio Chiquito, before



transferring by jeep or minibus to your chosen hotel in Monteverde, your base for the next two nights. The town of Monteverde is set in humid and temperate cloud forest and was founded in the 1950s by a group of Quakers who still produce quality cheeses and other dairy products in the region. The protected Biological Reserve is home to many species including the endangered golden toad and the colourful Quetzal bird, along with almost 500 butterfly species. (B)

Standard: Hotel Heliconia

Deluxe: Fonda Vela

#### Day 8: Monteverde

Today you will have a day at leisure to take one of the many optional excursions available in the area. You can explore the cloud forest reserves of Monteverde and Santa Elena, visit hummingbird, orchid and butterfly gardens, see the forest canopy from the bridges of the Sky Walk or take an exhilarating harness and zip line ride through the treetops. (B)

#### Day 9: Monteverde – San José

After breakfast at your hotel, you will have a private transfer back to San José for an overnight stay. Alternatively, continue on to one of Costa Rica's lovely beach resorts (see page 87 for a choice of hotels and prices). (B)

Standard: Hotel Parque del Lago

Deluxe: Real Intercontinental Costa Rica

#### Day 10: Depart San José

Transfer to San José Airport for your return flight. (B)

### Prices Include

- Accommodation as shown in itinerary
- Meals as specified (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- All transfers & sightseeing as detailed
- Domestic flight Tortuguero to San José
- Services of an English-speaking guide whilst touring

### Prices Exclude

- International airfares and local airport taxes
- Drinks, gratuities and items of a personal nature

Tour Dates	Essential Costa Rica			
	Standard		Deluxe	
	Twin	Single	Twin	Single
01 Jan 09-30 Apr 09	819	1099	1049	1519
01 May 09-30 Nov 09	819	1099	979	1379
01 Dec 09-20 Dec 09	909	1225	1165	1689
21 Dec 09-01 Jan 10	RQ	RQ	1189	1729
02 Jan 10-31 Mar 10	909	1225	1165	1689

Deluxe tour supp of £186 twm, £310 sgl applies 16-30 Nov 09. Supplements apply at Easter, Christmas and New Years, please call for details. Tour operates with a minimum of two passengers.



The canals of Tortuguero

# Costa Rica - Nature & Wildlife

## Natural Wonders of Costa Rica

12 Days from £1079

**Departures:** Daily

### Day 1: Arrive San José

On arrival in San José, you will be met and transferred to your chosen hotel for an overnight stay.

*Standard: Alta Hotel*

*Deluxe: Costa Rica Marriott*

### Day 2: San José - Turrialba

After breakfast, travel to Turrialba, 65km to the east. This beautiful region enjoys a climate perfect for the production of coffee, macadamia nuts and sugar cane, and large areas of its primary forests are protected biosphere reserves. You will have time today to enjoy the many optional activities on offer, such as rafting, horseback riding and forest walks. Stay in the valley for the next two nights. **(B)**

*Standard: Guayabo Lodge*

*Deluxe: Casa Turire*

### Day 3: Turrialba

Visit the wonderful CATIE Botanical Garden to admire some of the best collections worldwide of cacao, coffee, peach palm and tropical trees. Spend the rest of today at leisure. **(B)**

### Day 4: Turrialba - Sarapiquí

After breakfast travel to Sarapiquí, a biologically rich and humid region that encompasses large tracts of forest and swamplands. The majority of the day will be at leisure for you to explore the dense network of trails and observe the birds, butterflies and plants which inhabit the area. Stay for two nights in a traditional lodge. **(B)**

*Standard: La Quinta Country Inn*

*Deluxe: Centro Neotropico Sarapiquí*

### Day 5: Sarapiquí River Boat Ride

Take a fascinating boat ride down the Sarapiquí River this morning. The journey lasts 2-3 hours, and whilst on the boat look out for the monkeys, caimans, waterfowl and sloths which live in the river and surrounding forest. **(B)**

### Day 6: Sarapiquí - La Paz Waterfalls - Arenal

An early start this morning for your transfer to Arenal. On the way, stop at La Paz Waterfall Gardens, a beautiful natural reserve with several kilometres of forest trails which lead past waterfalls and rivers. The reserve also contains a butterfly observatory, hummingbird gardens and birdwatching areas. After lunch, continue to Arenal for a two-night stay within sight of the famously active volcano. **(BL)**

*Standard: Arenal Paraiso*

*Deluxe: Arenal Kioro*



### Day 7: Arenal Volcano & Hot Springs

This morning will be at leisure so maybe visit nearby La Fortuna Waterfall or simply enjoy the facilities available at the hotel. In the afternoon you will have a guided tour of the smouldering volcano, which constantly emits gases and steam and provides a nightly fireworks display. After dinner enjoy a relaxing bath in the hot springs. **(BD)**

### Day 8: Arenal - Manuel Antonio Beach

Transfer from your hotel to Manuel Antonio on the central Pacific coast. Just 10 minutes' walk from the pristine beach, backed by tropical forests and near the entrance to Manuel Antonio National Park, it is a great place to relax in beautiful surroundings. Check into your resort for a two-night stay. **(B)**

*Standard: Parador Hotel (Garden Room)*

*Deluxe: Parador Hotel (Jungle Room)*

### Day 9: Manuel Antonio At Leisure

A day at leisure to relax on the beach or explore the amazing Manuel Antonio National Park. **(B)**

### Day 10: Manuel Antonio - San Gerardo de Dota

This morning, transfer to San Gerardo de Dota, one of Costa Rica's finest areas for birdwatching. Comprising 95,000 hectares of protected cloud forest, it is home to many species of flora and fauna, including the elusive quetzal bird. Stay for two nights at a delightful lodge set in the forested hills in the heart of the reserve. **(B)**

*All categories: Trogón Lodge*

### Day 11: San Gerardo de Dota

Early in the morning, participate in a walking tour of the forest and try to find one of the most beautiful birds of the cloud forest, the quetzal. Free afternoon to enjoy the area's beautiful scenery or take optional excursions. **(B)**



La Fortuna Waterfall

### Day 12: Depart San José

Today you will be transferred to San José International Airport for your onward flight. **(B)**

### Prices Include

- Accommodation as shown in itinerary
- Meals as specified (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- All transfers and sightseeing as detailed
- Services of an English-speaking guide whilst touring

### Prices Exclude

- Airfares and local airport taxes
- Drinks, gratuities and items of a personal nature

### Tour Prices

Prices per person, in £'s from	Natural Wonders of Costa Rica			
	Standard		Deluxe	
	Twin	Single	Twin	Single
01Jan09-14Jan09	1219	1569	1439	2069
15Jan09-30Apr09	1099	1419	1439	2069
01May09-31May09	1079	1375	1439	2069
01Jun09-31Oct09	1079	1375	1355	1899
01Nov09-30Nov09	1225	1579	1355	1899
01Dec09-31Mar10	1225	1579	1599	2299

Deluxe tour supp of £86 twn, £169 sgl applies 01Jul-31Aug09 & Deluxe supp of £21 twn, £43 sgl or Standard supp of £129 twn, £148 sgl applies 21Dec09-14Jan10. Tour operates with a minimum of two passengers.

## 4 Day Corcovado National Park

Situated on the Osa Peninsula at Costa Rica's Southern Pacific Coast, Corcovado National Park is Costa Rica's most virgin region. It has been called one of the most biologically diverse territories on earth, a place where jaguars still roam the jungles, scarlet macaws fly freely around towns and monkeys are found in great numbers. This rugged paradise is an outdoor adventurers dream, offering world class fishing, surfing, diving and jungle explorations.

**Adventure**

**Departures:** Daily

### Day 1: San José - Corcovado National Park

This morning, take a flight (50 mins) from San José to Palmar Sur and transfer by road to Sierpe. Continue by boat through the mangroves of the Sierpe River, then along the coast until you reach the basic, but comfortable Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge. Designed in harmony with its environment, the lodge is ideally situated in a large private reserve bordering Corcovado National Park. **(LD)**

*Overnight: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge*

### Day 2: Corcovado National Park Tour

Enjoy a full day hiking trip in the Corcovado National Park. Your naturalist guide will take you along the jungle trails of the park to show you the local flora and fauna. After a visit to a beautiful waterfall enjoy a picnic lunch on the beach before you return to the lodge. **(BLD)**

### Day 3: Caño Island Tour

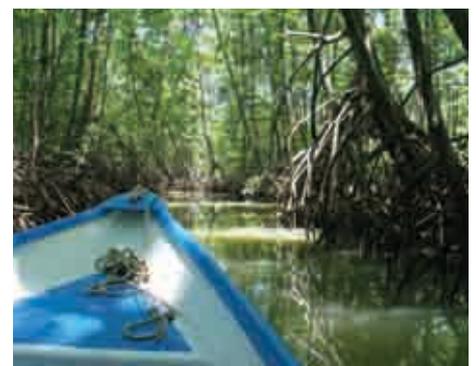
Today, explore the white sand beaches, rocky platforms and rugged cliffs of Caño Island, off the western coast of the Osa Peninsula. The existence of stone spheres and gold offerings leads many to believe that the island was used solely as a burial ground for important people in Pre-Columbian times. Relax by the beach or discover the island's coral reef which is ideal for snorkelling. **(BLD)**

### Day 4: Corcovado National Park - San José

Return by boat and road back to Palmar Sur for your flight to San José Airport where your tour ends. **(B)**

### Prices Include

- 3 nights accommodation, including all meals
- All transport & sightseeing on shared basis as detailed
- Corcovado National Park & Caño Island entrance fees
- Return domestic flights



### Tour Prices

Prices per person, in £'s from	Corcovado National Park			
	3 Nights		4 Nights	
	Twin	Single	Twin	Single
01Jan09-05Jan09	679	739	785	845
06Jan09-30Apr09	639	695	735	795
01May09-15Sep09	595	679	679	739
15Nov09-14Dec09	665	755	755	825
15Dec09-05Jan10	759	819	875	939
06Jan10-31Mar10	709	769	819	879

Lodge is closed 16Sep-14Nov09.

# Costa Rica Beach Extension



Pacific Coast sunset

The Pacific coastline of Costa Rica is rugged and beautiful, and there are opportunities to explore the coastal rainforest as well as relax on the quiet beaches, ranging from volcanic black to tropical white sands. The beaches offer everything from tranquil escapes in small boutique hotels to active holidays in full-service resorts, either way these hotels make excellent extensions to our Costa Rica tours.



## Cala Luna, Tamarindo Beach 4★

Cala Luna is set on the beach just five minutes from the centre of Tamarindo, a charming fishing village in northwest Costa Rica. The small deluxe hotel is surrounded by peaceful tropical gardens, and the rooms and villas are decorated in traditional Central American style with local woods and vibrant colours. Try the delicious freshly-caught lobster or some regional specialities in the Cala Moresca restaurant, accompanied by one of the excellent wines, or sip an exotic fruit cocktail by the pool at sunset.

**Facilities** restaurant • bar • internet • pool • watersports • laundry

**Rooms** 20 rooms • 21 villas • satellite TV • CD player (villas) • air-con • ceiling fans • tea & coffee • terrace • room service

**Additional Info.** Access: 45 min flight from San José or 4 hour car transfer from Monteverde.

Prices per person per night, including breakfast, in £'s from					
Standard Deluxe	Twin	Single	Garden Villa	Quad	Twin
01Jan09-30Apr09	71	142	01Jan09-30Apr09	71	142
01May09-30Jun09	53	107	01May09-30Jun09	54	109
01Jul09-20Aug09	71	142	01Jul09-20Aug09	71	142
21Aug09-31Dec09	53	107	21Aug09-31Dec09	54	109

Supplements apply 24Dec-03Jan. Breakfast not included with Garden Villa, please call for details.

## Club del Mar, Jacó Beach 3+★

Club del Mar is a charming boutique hotel and spa set in a quiet cove and surrounded by lush tropical gardens at the end of Jacó Beach. Most of the accommodation is in individual casitas, all of which offer sea views, but there are also several hotel rooms within the main building. There is a strong emphasis on watersports - kayaking, snorkelling, surfing and sailing can all be arranged at the hotel - and the fantastic Spa del Mar offers a wide range of treatments.

**Facilities** restaurant • bar • internet • pool • watersports • massage • laundry • kids' section of pool

**Rooms** 9 rooms & 22 casitas • cable TV • internet • air-con • room service • kitchenette (casitas only)

**Additional Info.** Access: 2 hour car transfer from San José, or 3 hour car transfer from Monteverde.

Prices per person per night, room only, in £'s from					
Deluxe	Twin	Single	Two Bdrm Condo	Quad	Twin
01Jan09-04Apr09	52	103	01Jan09-04Apr09	54	108
05Apr09-12Apr09	61	121	05Apr09-12Apr09	60	119
13Apr09-30Apr09	52	103	13Apr09-30Apr09	54	108
01May09-31Dec09	45	90	01May09-31Dec09	50	99

Supplements apply 15Dec-02Jan, please call for details.

## El Parador, Manuel Antonio Beach 4★

Located close to Manuel Antonio National Park, this boutique spa resort is set on a Pacific bluff surrounded by tropical rainforest. Swim at the pristine beach just 10 minutes' walk from the hotel, or enjoy the stunning ocean views from the infinity pool. There is exceptional fine dining in La Galeria restaurant, which overlooks the Pacific. The Pacifica Spa offers a range of treatments in an elegant and soothing setting.

**Facilities** 2 restaurants • 3 bars • internet • small gym • 2 pools • tennis • miniature golf course • spa • laundry

**Rooms** 130 rooms & suites • mini-bar • cable TV • internet • air-con • ceiling fan • tea & coffee • room service • balcony or terrace

**Additional Info.** Access: 25 min flight from San José to Quepos or 5 hour car transfer from Monteverde.

Prices per person per night, including breakfast, in £'s from					
Garden Room	Twin	Single	Jungle Room	Twin	Single
01Jan09-30Apr09	61	122	01Jan09-30Apr09	66	132
01May09-30Jun09	50	100	01May09-30Jun09	53	106
01Jul09-31Aug09	61	122	01Jul09-31Aug09	66	132
01Sep09-31Dec09	50	100	01Sep09-31Dec09	53	106

Supplements apply 20Dec-03Jan, please call for details.