

Costa Rica Encompassed

11 Days | Starts/Ends: San Jose



Discover the delights of Costa Rica on this 11 day tour which offers a combination of breathtaking national parks, volcanoes, rainforests and pristine beaches. Go hiking in Arenal and Poas Volcano National Park, white-water raft through the rainforest, soar above the tree tops on a zipline in Guanacaste and relax on beautiful Samara beach.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- San Jose - Costa Rica's cosmopolitan capital
- Poas Volcano National Park - a beautiful cloud forest, Botos Lagoon and the La Paz Waterfall Gardens
- Arenal Volcano National Park and the famous Arenal Volcano
- Pacuare River - White water rafting through the rainforest (class 3 - 4)
- Rincon de la Vieja - Zip lining through the trees
- Playa Samara - pristine beaches

What's Included

- 10 nights standard accommodation (superior and deluxe available on request)

- 10 breakfasts and 3 lunches
- Private airport arrival and departure transfer
- Entrance fees for all included excursions and activities.
- Shared transfers from San Jose to Arenal, Arenal to Rincon de la Vieja and Samara Beach to San Jose
- Private transfers from Rincon de la Vieja to Samara Beach
- Excursions to Poas Volcano National Park and Arenal Volcano National Park on a shared basis
- Pacuare River Rafting and Zip Lining Tour on a shared basis

What's Not Included

- International flights, departure and border taxes and visas.
- Tips on all excursions. Tip for your tour guides - an entirely personal gesture.
- Items of a personal nature.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Days 1-2 : San Jose & Poas Volcano NP



Upon arrival into San Jose international airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel in San Jose. The rest of the day is at leisure so you can either head into the city and start exploring or relax at the hotel.

On day 2 take an excursion to the breathtaking Poas Volcano National Park. Set out along the Pan American Highway and begin your ascent of the volcano, passing fern, flower and strawberry farms en route to the cloud forest of Poas Volcano. At the volcano you'll see the impressive main crater with its sulfur fumaroles and then hike to the beautiful Botos Lagoon, learning about the different ecosystems in the park. Travel on towards the Caribbean, stopping to discover La Paz Waterfall Gardens, a natural park where you'll walk along a scenic trail to the White Magic Waterfall, the most spectacular one in the area. Inside the park you'll also

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visit the largest butterfly observatory in the country. Enjoy a delicious lunch buffet before returning to San Jose. **Overnight - San Jose** (B:1, L:1)

Day 3 : Pacuare River Rafting

San Jose - Arenal. Travel by bus to Rios Tropicales Operations Centre to enjoy a rafting excursion on the Pacuare River. If you dream about rafting on a wild tropical river, the Pacuare is it! Rated one of the top rivers in the world, here you'll launch your raft and begin to paddle 19 miles deep into the heart of one of Costa Rica's most impressive primary rainforests. You'll pass through densely vegetated rainforest gorges, view cascading waterfalls, relax in serene pools and experience pounding rapids. After this exciting adventure travel on to the Arenal area, home of the majestic Arenal Volcano. **Overnight - Arenal** (B, L)

Day 4 : Arenal Volcano NP



Spend the day exploring Arenal Volcano National Park and Costa Rica's best-known volcano. On a hike along the scenic trails of Arenal National Park you will enter the tropical forest and areas which were once devastated by the fury of the volcano. During the hike, it is possible to see a great variety the area's characteristic flora and fauna. On clear days, you will enjoy incredible views of the impressive Arenal Volcano, Arenal Lake, the Tilarán mountain range, and Cerro Chato. The afternoon is free to explore the area or partake in optional activities, such as a visit to the hot springs. **Overnight - Arenal** (B, L)

Days 5-6 : Rincon de la Vieja NP



Arenal - Rincon de la Vieja National Park. On day 5 travel to Rincon de la Vieja, in north-western Costa Rica, where you can spend the rest of the day at leisure. The next day soar above the tree tops over one of the lushest tropical forests in Guanacaste on a canopy tour. Fly through the trees on zip lines, enjoying the spectacular views and seeing the local flora and fauna from an unrivalled vantage point. **Overnight - Rincon de la Vieja** (B:2)

Days 7-9 : Samara Beach



Rincon de la Vieja National Park - Playa Samara. Travel on to Playa Samara, one of Costa Rica's most stunning beaches, where you'll spend the next three days at leisure. Relax on the beach, soak up the sunshine and perhaps partake in some of the optional activities on offer such as snorkelling and kayaking. A visit to neighbouring Carrillo Beach, with its pristine waters, is also recommended. **Overnight - Samara Beach** (B:3)

Days 10-11 : San Jose

Travel back to San Jose on day 10 where you can spend your final night at leisure, exploring the capital. Arrangements end on the morning of day 11 with a transfer back to the airport

for your onward flights. **Overnight - San Jose** (day 10) (B:2)

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Costa Rica Country Guide

Costa Rica - Fact File

- Official Name: Republic of Costa Rica
- Capital: San Jose
- Population: 4.9 million
- Total Area: 51,100 square kilometres
- Official Language: Spanish
- Religions: Roman Catholic 76%, Evangelical 13%, others 10%
- Voltage: 110 volts, US-style two pronged plugs
- Dialling Code: +506
- Time Difference: GMT/UTC -6
- Airport Departure Tax: US\$29 - can be paid on arrival to avoid queues when departing.

Costa Rica - Visas

It is important to check with your nearest embassy or consulate regarding the rules depending on your nationality however most nationals do not need a visa to enter Costa Rica. Entry will be granted as long as your passport is valid for more than six months and you have proof of funds to support yourself during your stay as well as a return ticket (this is not usually requested). On arrival to Costa Rica you will be presented and requested to fill out an immigration/tourist card which you will need to keep a copy of until you leave the country. As a tourist you are usually granted with 30 days however this will depend on the immigration official you speak to.

Costa Rica - Climate

Costa Rica has a tropical and subtropical climate depending on the time of year. The dry season usually runs from December – April, whilst rainy season runs from May – November with the highlands offering cooler temperatures.

Visit www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your tour.

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Costa Rica - Money

The currency used in Costa Rica is the Costa Rican colon. For up-to-date exchange rates with your own currency visit www.xe.com.

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

Generally, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to use ATM's. CIRRUS ATMs are available at most major tourist locations and as long as you have a four-digit pin you can withdraw cash with ease, however you should not rely on this as there are times the machines won't work even if your bank tells you they will. Always have a few back-ups just in case.

Visa is the most accepted credit card however due to poor connections there can be issues with the machines accepting the purchase even if you have funds in your account. There may also be a commission added to your bill (usually 8%), so it is advisable to pay with cash where you can.

Travellers cheques can often be a hassle to cash in Costa Rica so if you do decide to take them, make sure they are in US dollars and 'American Express' cheques as they are more widely accepted.

San Jose is the easiest place (and sometimes the only place) for you to stock up on money. There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that you may bring into Costa Rica, however very large sums should be declared on arrival.

Remember that once out of Costa Rica you will generally not be able to use or exchange colones (except at the border towns). Therefore, you must make sure you spend/exchange/donate any left-over money before leaving the country.

Costa Rica - Local Transport

Taxis are recommended for most journeys in San José. All taxis should have a meter but it's a good idea to be aware of what the approximate price should be before getting in the taxi. In other Costa Rican towns and cities, walking is basically the best and cheapest way to see the sights.

Costa Rica - Food & Drink

Food

There's a lot of different food options to choose from in Costa Rica and travellers are usually surprised by the variety on offer. The Caribbean coast tends to offer dishes influenced by the island nations and curry spices are heavily used whereas on the Pacific Coast in the Guanacaste Province there are still a lot of ancient indigenous influence where maize is heavily used.

Local cuisine is simple yet tasty and not very spicy. The national dish of "Gallo Pinto", consists of red and white beans with rice, sometimes served with egg, is the most common breakfast dish. The Gallo pinto from the Caribbean side is made with coconut milk and is very tasty.

Lunch is a similar affair however the rice and beans are usually supplemented with meat, fried plantain, salad and cabbage. Other specialities include "Sopa negra" (Black bean soup) and "Olla de carne" (beef, plantain, corn, yucca and chayote soup).

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. You might find that you are eating a lot of omelettes and other egg dishes. Our tour leaders will do their best to provide interesting vegetarian alternatives when arranging group meals, but your patience and understanding is requested.

Drink

Costa Rica has no national drink, however "horchata", a cinnamon flavoured drink made of ground rice, "batidos", fresh fruit shakes made with milk or water and ice, and "fresco de frutas", a fruit salad floating on a base of cola and water are very popular.

Beer is also heavily on offer in Costa Rica with countless larger, and dark beers on offer. The most popular are Bavaria and Imperial. Wine, once a rare commodity, has become more common in higher end restaurants, where there are good Chilean and Argentinean varieties on offer. Also, very popular is "guaro", a clear spirit distilled from fermented sugarcane.

All drinks such as water, soft or alcoholic drinks are at your own expense throughout the tour. The following is a guideline for drinks bought in a shop in the street. Prices in restaurants and hotels can sometimes be more than double the prices specified below:

- 1 litre of water US\$1
- 30cl bottle of soft drink US\$1
- 30cl bottle of beer US\$1.50
- 50cl bottle of beer US\$2

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water. Bottled water and carbonated soft drinks are widely available and are generally safe to drink.

Cost Rica - Bugs

Should your tour include any visit to the jungle/rainforest region you should be prepared to come into contact with an array of wildlife including insects and spiders etc. This is all part of the jungle experience and most insects and bugs are harmless. As you will be in the jungle finding any bugs in your room doesn't mean the room is unclean – it's all part of the experience. If you are uncomfortable with bugs we recommend you bring insect repellent spray and coils to put in your room.

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