PRIVATE TOUR: Spend 10 exciting days exploring Costa Rica, coast to coast. Explore the waterways of Tortuguero and gaze at the Arenal volcano, discover the natural wonders of Monteverde on a scenic hike and relax on Manuel Antonio's beautiful beaches. A great way to see everything this colourful country has to offer!

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights
- San Jose - Discover Costa Rica's cosmopolitan capital
- Arenal Volcano National Park - Take a scenic hike through the park and gaze in wonder at the mighty Arenal Volcano
- Lake Arenal - Travel across this picturesque highland lake
- Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve - Take in the natural wonders of Monteverde on a guided walk. Shrouded in a canopy of cloud, the park is home to a wonderful array of flora and fauna
- Manuel Antonio National Park on the Pacific coast - Enjoy free time to bask on beautiful beaches and explore the lush rainforest, which is teeming with wildlife
- Tortuguero National Park - Explore the waterways of this beautiful national park, which is home to a Green Sea Turtle nesting ground

What's Included
- 9 nights STANDARD hotels. SUPERIOR or DELUXE hotel upgrade options are available upon request. Accommodation rating – See Trip Notes for details
- Breakfast daily, 3 lunches and 2 dinners
- An airport arrival and departure transfer
- Entrance into Monteverde Reserve and Manuel Antonio Park
- Shuttle transfers from Arenal - Monteverde and Monteverde - Manuel Antonio (shared with other travellers)
- All other transfers in a private vehicle
- Guided tour of Tortuguero Canals and the Caribbean Conservation Centre
- Guided naturalist walk/hike in Arenal Volcano National Park and Monteverde Cloud Forest
- Entrance fees for all included excursions and activities

What's Not Included
- International flights and visas
- Departure taxes or border taxes
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : San Jose
Upon arrival into San Jose airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure to start exploring San Jose or just to relax in the hotel. If you'd like a guided tour of the capital, this can be arranged upon request. Overnight - San Jose

Days 2-3 : Tortuguero
San Jose - Tortuguero. After breakfast at the hotel you travel to Tortuguero on Costa Rica's beautiful Caribbean coast, stopping for lunch en route at a local restaurant in Guapiles. From La Pavona dock you will be transferred by boat through the Tortuguero canals to visit Tortuguero village and the Caribbean Conservation Centre. Your hotel is located in the north eastern corner of Tortuguero, and is accessible only by air and water. It is the ideal location from which to explore this unique and magical area, surrounded by towering trees and exuberant vegetation.
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Early the next morning take a guided tour of Tortuguero National Park, travelling along the canals which are an extensive system of natural and man-made waterways used both for simple transportation and jungle exploration. Tortuguero is the Caribbean version of the Amazon, with incredible wildlife that includes monkeys, iguanas, and colourful tropical birds. After the tour head back to the hotel for breakfast. The rest of the day is free to enjoy the peace and harmony of the place. Kayaks are available free of charge at the hotel if you wish to continue exploring the waterways. Overnight - Tortuguero (B:2, L:2, D:2)

Days 4-5 : Arenal Volcano National Park

Leaving the jungle, travel on to Arenal in Costa Rica’s fertile northern lowlands. Until 2010, it was Costa Rica’s most active volcano. Much to the enjoyment of its visitors, Arenal spewed enormous amounts of lava, gas and ash on a regular basis. That eruptive cycle – which began with the infamous eruption of 1968 – ended recently. In October 2010, Arenal entered into an indeterminate resting phase. For the time being, visitors will be unable to watch the much-loved explosions, although you will still enjoy the beauty and incredible biodiversity. Wind-sculpted elfin woodlands give way to rainforests where tall trees, festooned with orchids, bromeliads, ferns and vines, rise high into the sky. Overnight - Arenal Volcano National Park (B:2)

Days 6-7 : Monteverde

After breakfast on day 6 travel on to Monteverde, crossing Lake Arenal to get to the Monteverde border where another vehicle is waiting for you to take you to your hotel.

The following day discover the natural wonders of Monteverde on a guided naturalist walk. The Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve cannot fail to impress with its beauty and incredible biodiversity. Wind-sculpted elfin woodlands give way to rainforests where tall trees, festooned with orchids, bromeliads, ferns and vines, rise high into the sky. Overnight - Monteverde (B:2)

Days 8-9 : Manuel Antonio

Take a shuttle transfer to Manuel Antonio where you’ll enjoy two days at leisure to relax on the beautiful beaches or enjoy a range of activities within the park including a forest canopy tour and ocean kayaking. Overnight - Manuel Antonio Village (B:2)

Day 10 : San Jose

Today a private transfer takes you to San Jose airport for your flight home. End of arrangements.(B)

Tipping

Tipping is a big part of life in Central America with a lot of residents relying on tips for their livelihood, however if you did not receive good service you should not feel pressured or obliged to leave a tip. A service charge of 10% of the total amount spent is usually added to the bill in restaurants and is a recommended standard amount.

Tipping is an essential part of the culture. For a job well done, we would suggest for your tour guide: USD$5-6 per traveller, for each day of sightseeing.

For your driver and On The Go Representative we’d recommend USD$2-3 per traveller for each day of service. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

Accommodation ratings

On our Private trips, you can often choose your style of accommodation. The price quoted on our website is reflective of the included accommodation, please see the “included” section on the first page of this document for details. Should you opt for an alternative hotel category, this will be confirmed in writing with the respective price on your invoice.

For further details about the indicative hotels, please see the “hotels” tab on our website. Here we rank hotel’s in their respective country (REGIONAL CATEGORY) - but we also tell you how it ranks by Western standards (OUR CATEGORY).

STANDARD - Equates to a Western 3-star standard, always featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant.
SUPERIOR - Equates to a Western 4-star standard, featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant and often a swimming pool and/or a fitness centre.
DELUXE - Equates to a Western 5-star standard, usually featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, excellent service and customer care.
LUXURY - Equates to a Western 5-star plus standard - the creme de la creme. Featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant,
swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, this accommodation is a cut above the rest. Sheer opulence!

**KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**

**Costa Rica Country Guide**

**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. For further information: www.onthegotours.com/Central-America/Visas

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. Any costs shown are subject to change, though are an accurate reflection of costs at time of writing. Please also note that visa requirements are subject to change and are the responsibility of the traveller and not that of On The Go Tours.

**Costa Rica - Fact file**

**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.

**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 - 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 and 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 José is the easiest place (and sometimes the only place) for you 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.

**Costa Rica - Food and 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, com, 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
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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.