

# Costa Rica Coast to Coast

10 Days | Starts/Ends: San Jose



*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 accommodation (superior and deluxe available on request)
- 9 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 2 dinners
- 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 NP and Monteverde Cloud Forest
- Entrance fees for all included excursions and activities.

### 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.
- Meals - allow US\$25-30 spending money per day to cover meals, snacks, drinks, limited souvenirs and any extras.
- Items of a personal nature.

## 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

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magical area, surrounded by towering trees and exuberant vegetation.

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 that could change within a matter of months or years. Travellers to Arenal will still enjoy its bountiful sights, sounds and activities—there are mountains to be hiked, lakes to be fished and rivers to be floated. As one of the country's most scenic and accessible areas, it is a requisite stop on any tour of Costa Rica.

The following day enjoy a trek through Arenal Volcano National Park. The afternoon is free for optional activities such as horse riding, canyoning or a boat tour of Cano Negro wildlife reserve. **Overnight - La Fortuna** (B:2, L:1)

## 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)

### 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](http://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](http://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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