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COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is located in Central America, occupying an area of 51,100 km² (19,730 sq. mi.), bordering Nicaragua to the North and Panama to the South. Being roughly the size of Denmark, Costa Rica boasts in having one of the largest natural protected areas in the world, with approximately 25% of its territory preserved in land and marine national parks, biological reserves, and other wilderness areas.

The territorial division of Costa Rica includes seven provinces: San José, Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia, Guanacaste, Puntarenas and Limón all of them offering attractive tourist destinations of almost unlimited possibilities.

Costa Rica is one of the most cherished tourist destinations on the planet. This small country is blessed with everything to satisfy the interests of thousands of travelers who visit each year.



Birds Migration

More than **five billion** birds migrate through Costa Rica every year.

The biggest portion of those birds are coming from Alaska, the Canada Tundra, Arctic Circle, Great Lakes and other locations of North America to escape the Winter in Central and South America.

Migratory birds including **raptors, shorebirds, tanagers, warblers, orioles, sandpipers, hummingbirds** use their amazing vision to orient themselves by following groups of stars in the horizon, others follow the sound of the surf along the coast, feel the magnetic field of the planet or geographical landmarks.

From the **920 bird species** of Costa Rica more than **250 are migratory** and this is the country with **the highest density of species of birds in the world**, where you can see more than 100 species of birds in a single day visiting the key areas and hotspots.



More than 250 species of migratory birds cross Costa Rica or make use of stopover sites for resting, feeding or overwintering. **5 million of raptors (19 different species)**, “2nd highest abundance of migratory raptors in the world” (BirdLife), including the biggest migration of peregrine falcons in the planet.

Migratory raptors found in Costa Rica:

Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Harris’s Hawk, Northern Harrier, Hook-billed Kite, Swallow-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Plumbeous Kite, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, White Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Swainson’s Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, America Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine falcon.

Fall Migration: From August to December.

Spring Migration: From February to May.





Sea Turtle Arrivals

5 of the 7 species of the world sea turtles happen in Costa Rica every year and 4 of them nest in Costa Rica's 212 km (132 mi) of Caribbean Shore and 1016 km (611 mi) of Pacific Coast.

Turtle nesting generally is a nocturnal event, but some individuals can be seen during the sunrise.

The **Olive Ridley** sea turtle is the only species which arrives by the thousands along the Pacific.

The **Leatherback**, **Hawksbill** and the **Loggerhead** come out of the ocean one by one to lay eggs.

The **Pacific Green turtle** is a sub-species of the Green sea turtle. Separated from its Caribbean relatives, Pacific Green turtles adopted the habit of laying eggs alone.



The **Green turtles of the Caribbean**, in contrast, emerge from the ocean by the hundreds. Because individuals spread out over a large geographical area, the Green turtle's nesting pattern is not considered a massive arrival.

The 7 sea turtle species that grace our oceans belong to a unique evolutionary lineage that dates back at least 110 million years.

Sea turtles fall into 2 main subgroups: **(a)** the unique **family Dermochelyidae** which consists of a single species, the leather-back, and **(b)** the **family Cheloniidae**, which comprises the 6 species of hard-shelled sea turtles.



Whales Migration

Costa Rica is the only place in the world with **2 separate populations of humpback whales** coming to give birth and train the new generations of whales.

Dolphins all year round and other cetaceans enjoy our warm waters.

Marino Ballena National Park with the famous **Tombolo or Whale's Tail geological structure**, is the most famous landmark and location to experience the whale watching in Costa Rica.



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RECOMMENDED ROUTES

ROUTE # 1



San José - Ballena & Playa Tortuga
Cerro de la Muerte - Kekoldi
Tortuguero - Sarapiquí &
Virgen del Socorro - Arenal

ROUTE # 2



San José - Caño Negro
Arenal - Palo Verde
Playa Grande - Ostional
Tambor - Tárcoles

ROUTE # 3



San José - Osa Península
Tárcoles - Nicoya Península
Sarapiquí - Siquirres
Kekoldi - Tortuguero

Tour operators & DMC'S

Amadeus Travel Agency	www.amadeus.co.cr
ARA Tours	www.aratours.com
Asuaire Travel	www.tierra-verde.com
Aventuras Tierra Verde	www.asuaire.com
Best Of Costa Rica Tour Operator & Dmc	www.bestcostaricadmc.com
Bella Aventura	www.bella-aventura.com
Cactus Tours	www.cactustour.com
Cast Central America	www.castcr.com
Costa Rica For All	www.costaricaforall.com
Costa Rica Groups	www.costaricagroups.com
Costa Rica Sun Tours	www.crsuntours.com
Costa Rica Top Tours	www.costaricatoptours.com
Costa Rican Trails	www.cost Ricantrails.com
Costa Rican Treasures Travel Service	www.costaricantreasures.com
Destination Costa Rica	www.destinationcr.com
Destination Services	www.destinationsservices.com
Grayline Tours	www.graylinecostarica.com
Kabek Tours	www.kabektours.com
Localista	www.localistatravel.com
Mta Miki Travel	www.mikitravel.net
Serendipity Adventures	www.serendipityadventures.com
Swiss Travel	www.swisstravelcr.com
TAM Travel	www.tamcostarica.com
Travel Excellence	www.travelexcellence.com
Unique Adventures	www.uniquecr.com
Viatur Travel Services	www.viaturtravel.net

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Adobe Rent A Car	www.adobecar.com
Europcar	www.europcar.co.cr
Grupo Anc (Alamo, Enterprise, National)	www.enterprise.com www.enterprise.com www.natcar.com
Thrifty	www.reservasthrifty.com
Sixt Rent A Car	www.car-rental.sixt.com
Solid Car Rental	www.solidcarrental.com

Monteverde Hotels

Poco a poco	www.hotelpocoapoco.com
El Establo	www.elestable.com

South Pacific Hotels

Hotel Cristal Ballena Resort & Spa	www.cristal-ballena.com
Nicuesa Rainforest Lodge	www.nicuesalodge.com
Punta Marenco	www.puntamarenco.com
Hotel Villas del Río Mar	www.villasriomar.com
Tiskita	www.tiskita.com

Guanacaste Hotels

Bahía del Sol Beach Front Boutique Hotel	www.bahiadelsohotel.com
Buena Vista del Rincón Eco Adventure Park Hotel & Spa	www.buenavistalodgecr.com
Capitan Suizo	www.hotelcapitansuizo.com
Margaritaville Beach Resort Playa Flamingo	www.margaritavillecr.com
Hacienda Guachipelin	www.guachipelin.com/en
Hotel Azura Resort	www.azuraresorts.com
Hotel Leyenda	www.hotelleyenda.com
Hotel Bosque Del Mar	www.bosquedelmar.com
Hotel Villa Sol & Beach Resort	www.villassol.com
Planet Hollywood Beach Resort CR	www.planethollywoodhotels.com/property/costa-rica

Northern Plains Hotels

Arenal

Arenal Manoa	www.arenalmanoa.com
Arenal Springs Resort And Spa	www.hotelarenalsprings.com
Lomas Del Volcán	www.lomasdelvolcan.com
Hotel Faro Arenal	www.hotelfaroarenal.com
Hotel Los Heroes	www.pequenahelvecia.com
Rio Celeste Hideaway Hotel	www.riocelstehideaway.com
Tabacon Thermal Resort & Spa	www.tabacon.com
Tilajari Hotel Resort	www.tilajari.com

Sarapiquí

Selva Verde Lodge & Rainforest Reserve	www.selvaverde.com
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Central Valley Hotels

San José Downtown

Aurola Holiday Inn	www.aurolahotels.com/default-es.html
Barceló San Jose	www.barcelo.com
Crowne Plaza Corobicí	www.crowneplaza.com
Hotel Best Western Irazú	www.grupomarta.com
Hotel Grano De Oro	www.hotelgranodeoro.com
Hotel Presidente	www.hotel-presidente.com
Hotel Palma Real	www.hotelpalmareal.com
Studio Hotel	www.costaricastudiohotel.com
Sleep Inn Hotel Paseo Las Damas	www.sleepinnsanjose.com
Soluxe El Sesteo Hotel	www.sesteo.com
Wyndham Garden Escazú	www.wyndham.com

Cartago

Casa Turire	www.hotelcasaturire.com
Trogon Lodge	www.grupomawamba.com

Heredia

Costa Rica Marriott Hacienda Belén	www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/sjocr-costa-rica-marriott-hotel-san-jose
Hotel City Express San José	www.cityexpress.com/es
Hotel Wyndham San José Herradura	www.wyndhamherradura.com

Alajuela

Poás Volcano Lodge	http://www.poasvolcanolodge.com
Villa Blanca	www.villablanca-costarica.com
Xandari Resort & Spa	www.xandari.com

Central Pacific Hotels

Hotel Karahe	www.karahe.com
Macaw Lodge	www.macawlodge.com
Los Sueños Marriott Ocean & Golf	www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/sjols-los-suenos-marriott-ocean-and-golf-resort
Si Como No Hotel	www.sicomono.com
Hotel Divisamar	www.divisamar.com
Hotel Parador Resort & Spa	www.hotelparador.com
Hotel Shana By The Beach	www.shanahotel.com
Villa Caletas	www.villacaletas.com

Puntarenas Hotels

Fiesta Resort	www.fiestaresort.com
Tango Mar	www.tangomar.com

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Caribbean Hotels

Aninga Hotel & Spa	www.aningalodgetortuguero.com
Evergreen Lodge	www.evergreentortuguero.com
Laguna Lodge Tortuguero	www.lagunatortuguero.com
Lecameleon Boutique Hotel	www.lecameleonhotel.com
Manatus Hotel	www.manatuscostarica.com
Mawamba Lodge	www.grupomawamba.com
Pachira Lodge	www.pachiralodge.com
Selva Bananito Lodge	www.selvabananito.com
Turtle Beach Lodge	www.turtlebeachlodge.com

Domestic Airlines

Sansa regional	www.taca.com
Aerobell Airlines	www.aerobell.com

Tours

Bay Island Cruises	www.bayislandcruises.com
Costa Rica Sky Adventures	www.skytrek.com
Catarata Rio Fortuna	www.cataratalafortuna.com
Eco Jungle Cruises	www.ecojunglecruises.com
Ecoterra Expeditions	www.ecoterracostarica.com
Místico Arenal Hanging Bridges Park	www.misticopark.com
Monteverde Extremo Park	monteverdeextremo.com
Pedal Board (Volcano Travel CR)	www.volcanotravelcostarica.com
Rainforest Adventures Costa Rica	www.rainforestadventure.com
Rainforest Chocolate Tour	www.rainforestchocolatetour.com
Ríos Tropicales	www.riostropicales.com
Sensoria	www.sensoria.cr
Tirimbina	www.tirimbina.org
Tucanes Tour	www.tucanestours.com
Vip City Bus	www.vipcitybus.com
White Water Excitement Costa Rica	www.excitementcostarica.com

Ground Transportation

Interbus	www.interbusonline.com
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GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Capital:** San José
- **Currency:** Colón
- **Country Code:** (506)
- **Borders:** Bordered to the east and northeast by the Caribbean Sea; to the west and south by the Pacific Ocean; to the southeast by Panama; and to the north by Nicaragua.
- **Land Area:** 51,100 km² (19,730 sq. mi.)
- **Maximum length:** 464 km (288 miles) from the Sapoá River to Burica Point.
- **Minimum length:** 119 km (74 miles) from Tuba to the mouth of the Colorado River.
- **Maximum width:** 259 km (161 miles) from Cape Santa Elena to the mouth of the Colorado River.
- **Highest mountain:** Mt. Chirripó (altitude 3,820 m - 12,530 feet - above sea level).
- **Widest volcanic crater:** Poás Volcano (one of the largest craters in the world at 1 km - 0.62 miles - in diameter).
- **National Flower:** Purple orchid (Guarianthe skinneri)
- **National Tree:** Guanacaste or Elephant Ear Tree (Enterolobium cyclocarpuri).
- **National Bird:** Clay-coloured thrush or robin (Tardus grayii).
- **Climate:** Tropical with two annual seasons - Dry, or summer (December - April), and Rainy, or winter (May-November).
- **Population:** 5,500,000 inhabitants.
- **Provinces:** Seven (San José, Cartago, Heredia, Alajuela, Puntarenas, Guanacaste, Limón).
- **Electricity:** 110 volts

• HISTORY

Human settlement in Costa Rica dates back to at least the year 5000 B.C., but in comparison with the great pre-Hispanic civilizations in the Americas, the indigenous people of Costa Rica were not numerous, nor did they achieve great development.

The current Constitution of November 7, 1949, defines Costa Rica as a Democratic Republic. **With the abolition of the army in 1948, Costa Rica has consolidated its commitment to peace and democracy.** National forces are its only security. Instead of spending on troops and weapons, Costa Rica has invested those resources in health and education. This landmark decision has created a peaceful and pacifist country.

• CLIMATE

Costa Rica is a tropical country located between two oceans, with a complex geography that gives rise to varied climatic conditions and diverse ecosystems, ranging from tropical dry forest to rainforest and cloud forest. In the Central Valley, temperatures stay generally between 14 and 22 degrees Celsius (57-72 degrees Fahrenheit). While the country has no defined seasons, and regional climates stay relatively stable throughout the year, there are changes between "summer" (dry season) and "winter" (rainy season). Summer season is usually December to April, and "winter" is from May to November.





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• OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Costa Rica is a Spanish-speaking country, although a high percentage of the population speaks English.

• HEALTH AND EDUCATION

To enter Costa Rica, vaccinations are not required by European and American tourists. Because of Costa Rica's geographical location, regardless of the country's high levels of health, there are still isolated cases of tropical diseases. Every city has one or more hospitals, and there are always clinics or other medical services in small towns. Private medical clinics in San Jose meet European standards.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Costa Rica has one of the best health systems in the world. Infant mortality has decreased, while life expectancy increases. In education, the country currently has one of the highest literacy rates on the continent with about 96% of the population.

• PROTECTED AREAS - FLORA AND FAUNA

Costa Rica boasts one of the largest protected areas in the world, since approximately 25 percent of the national territory consists of land and marine national parks, biological reserves, and other wilderness areas. It's one of the most cherished tourist destinations on the planet. This small country is blessed with everything to satisfy the interests of thousands of travellers who visit each year.

The climatic diversity of Costa Rica and the government's conservationist policies make this country a true natural paradise with a diversity of ecosystems that protect a wealth of the world's biodiversity.

In its little more than 51,000 square kilometres (19,730 sq. mi.), representing 0.03 percent of the planet's surface, **here**

lives about 5 percent of the world's biodiversity Costa Rica is home to five different climatic regions – **dry forest, rainforest, temperate, cloud forest, and wetlands. These different environments result in multiple ecological systems that shelter numerous species of flora and fauna.**

The Costa Rican government has developed and maintains a dynamic policy of conservation of national parks and wildlife refuges, among other initiatives of environmental management and protection of natural and cultural resources. The Caribbean and Pacific coastlines are scenic paradises; and from north to south, down the length of the country, stretch 500 km of mountains interspersed with majestic volcanoes and gentle hills, from which flow rivers and streams that irrigate primeval forest and agricultural crops.

In the mountainous area of the Caribbean, between 800 and 1500 m (2,625-4,920 feet) above sea level, the vegetation is characteristic of tropical rainforest, while dry forest is dominant in the North Pacific and the Central Valley; here fewer trees grow and instead grasses and herbaceous plants proliferate.

With regard to fauna, we can say that Costa Rica has an extraordinarily large and diverse number of species that live here. Depending on the area, you have the chance to see Resplendent Quetzals, five or six species of toucans, four types of monkeys, tapirs, deer, anteaters, sloths, coatis, otters, foxes, jaguars, ocelots, pumas, Scarlet Macaws, crocodiles, and dolphins, among many other animals.

In addition to those species, wilderness areas host approximately 13,000 kinds of plants, more than 2,000 species of butterflies, 4,500 night moths, 175 types of amphibians, 225 kinds of reptiles, 250 mammals, 1,600 species of freshwater and saltwater fish, and more than 900 different birds. Tens of thousands of insect species live in Costa Rica, and new species are continually being discovered.

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• TRIP TIPS

Airports

Juan Santamaría International Airport is the main airport of Costa Rica. It is located in the province of Alajuela, 18 km from the capital city of San Jose. This terminal has won several awards including: Third Best Airport in its category and fourth best airport overall in the Americas.

The Daniel Oduber Quiros International Airport, also known as Liberia International Airport, is the second largest airport in Costa Rica. Located in Liberia, Guanacaste, the Liberia International Airport is about 217 km (135 miles) northwest of the capital city of San Jose. It functions mainly as a hub to serve the growing number of tourists who come to enjoy the great sunny weather and spectacular beaches of Guanacaste and the Nicoya Peninsula. Arriving at Liberia International Airport is the fastest way to get to places like Tamarindo, Playas del Coco, the Papagayo Gulf, Playa Flamingo, Playa Samara and the Las Baulas (Leatherback sea turtles) Marine National Park.

- Taxis Airport-San José: US\$15-\$20
- Buses Alajuela-San José (5 a.m. – 10 p.m.), stop at the airport every 30 minutes.
- Departure tax: US\$29.00 per person

Flight Connections

Direct flights from Europe:

British Airways:	Two direct weekly flights San José - London Gatwick
Thomson Airways:	One direct weekly flight San José - London Gatwick
Iberia:	One direct daily flight San José - Madrid
Condor:	Two direct weekly flights San José - Frankfurt
Air France:	Three weekly flights San José - Paris
Edelweiss Air:	Two direct weekly flights San José - Zurich
Lufthansa:	Two direct weekly flights San José - Frankfurt

Additionally, there are many connecting flights to San Jose via the United States (Newark, Atlanta, Miami, Houston and Dallas). There is easy domestic flight service between San Jose and Daniel Oduber International Airport in Liberia, among many other points around the country.

• IMMIGRATION

To enter Costa Rica, European citizens require a passport with a validity of at least six months after their arrival in the country. Maximum stay authorized without a visa is 90 days. Also, if you travel via the United States, regulations for that country should be taken into consideration.

The main requirements to enter Costa Rica are:

- Passport valid for six months upon entry
- Entrance and departure ticket
- No European country, except Russia, requires a visa to enter Costa Rica.

• SECURITY

Costa Rica is a relatively safe country. However, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of assaults and robberies, so it is advisable to use general safety precautions. Leave expensive jewellery at home. Use hotel safes for your valuables. Do not leave valuables visible in a car. Be aware when walking around. Use taxis at night rather than walk.

• CUISINE

Cuisine in Costa Rica is easy to digest and is not spicy. Local dishes are mainly based on rice and beans. The typical breakfast is called “Gallo Pinto” (“spotted rooster”), a tasty mix of white rice, black beans and spices, served with fried or scrambled eggs. Lunch and dinner for Costa Ricans consists of rice, beans, fried plantains, vegetables, salad and either fish, chicken or meat, and is known as a “casado.” Costa





Ricans also frequently eat seafood. Costa Rica is a paradise of fruits, which are consumed fresh, or in smoothies made with milk, or juices made with water. In almost all restaurants, you can find good quality imported wine and local and imported beers.

• DRINKING WATER

The water is safe to drink in most parts of the country; however, we recommend drinking bottled water, especially in areas close to the coasts.

• AVERAGE COSTS

Lunch at a small, local restaurant (in Costa Rica called a "soda") costs from 5 to 6 Euros. At a larger restaurant, you will pay about 5 to 12 Euros; and in a hotel, from 12 Euros and up. Fruit juices, bottled water and beer can be purchased in supermarkets and stores for about 1.50 Euros.

• MONEY

The Costa Rican Colon is the official currency of the country and can be exchanged at banks for US dollars, and vice versa. Exchanging Euros is only possible in a few bank branches; for this reason, it is important to bring US dollars in cash when you travel to Costa Rica or you can easily get them through the networked ATMs with Visa and Master Card. The exchange rate for Colones at the airport is less favourable than in banks.

Regarding tips, there is no need to tip in restaurants, because the bills automatically include a 10% service charge, plus sales tax of 13%. It is advisable to leave a tip of about 0.50 Euros to hotel bellmen and the cleaning staff and between 1 and 5 Euros per day per person to tour guides.

• ELECTRICITY & INTERNET

The electrical voltage is 110V throughout the country. A North American system plug adaptor is required. Costa Rica has

extensive Internet coverage except in very remote areas. Almost all hotels offer internet service, either through a central computer or a wireless connection. In most cities, there are Internet Cafes.

• RENTAL CARS

Costa Rica's extensive road network allows you to discover every corner of the country on your own in a rented vehicle. The main roads and highways are mostly in good condition, but secondary roads are often gravel and not in the best state. It is recommended to rent a 4x4 vehicle to move comfortably throughout the entire nation any time of year. Although road signage is continually improving, most rental car companies offer a GPS for hire, which greatly helps with orientation and directions. Along with a rented vehicle, you can enjoy an "Open Voucher" program. Costs are reduced and the program is flexible to suit your tastes. Many rental car companies apply compensation programs for CO2 emissions produced by their operations. Customers who wish to contribute to environmental protection can take this criterion into account when selecting a vehicle rental company.

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• BEST TIME TO VISIT COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is a destination to which you can travel virtually year-round since it has several climatic micro-zones. The mountain ranges spanning the country from the northwest to the southeast form a barrier that divides the country into two larger climatic zones, the Pacific and the Caribbean. The amazing thing is that the climate is nearly the complete opposite from one zone to the other. The country differentiates between a dry season and a rainy season, also known as green season. It is not often, however, that rains fall for several days consecutively, except between May and November.

August to November is the best period of the birding migration to visit Costa Rica with birdwatching purposes.

• WHAT IS ADVISABLE TO PACK?

We recommend travelling with two pieces of luggage - a main suitcase and a sports bag for short trips of one or more days. On some excursions, or for boat transfers and domestic flights, there are luggage limitations of 12 kg per person. Your

main suitcase can be stored safely in your hotel in San Jose at no additional cost. It is common on a trip to Costa Rica to use various means of transportation, such as boats, buses or airplanes. To facilitate passenger mobility, it is helpful to carry luggage of a reasonable size and weight. In addition to personal items, it is recommended to pack:

- Sturdy shoes or good sports shoes
- A jacket or a warm pullover to visit the volcanoes and higher elevation areas
- Long pants and a light pullover or long-sleeved shirt for hikes in the forest
- Light summer clothing
- Swimming suit
- Hat or cap
- Pair of sandals that are good for walking and beach
- A raincoat or rain poncho
- Flashlight or torch
- Anti-mosquito repellent
- Sun block or sun cream
- Binoculars
- Camera





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TORTUGUERO
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TURTLE NESTING

At night, during the green turtle nesting season, thousands of green turtles come to the beach to lay their eggs. Tortuguero is considered the most important place for nesting in the Caribbean hemisphere.

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