



Costa Rica

Located in Central America between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Costa Rica encapsulates dense jungles, rugged beaches, active volcanoes and eerie cloudforests. It is home to 5% of the world's total biodiversity and more than 800 species of bird. Ideal for self-drive trips, activities and family holidays.

At a glance

- Beautiful, small, compact country
- Jungle, beaches, cloudforest, active volcanoes
- Easy to get around – perfect for fly drive
- Dry season December to April, but most areas can be visited all year round
- Amazing selection of wildlife- including turtles, monkeys, sloths, butterflies, caiman, crocodiles, iguanas, poison dart frogs and armadillos
- Excellent bird watching – over 800 species including humming birds, toucans and scarlet macaws
- Wonderful flora – including 8,000 species of orchid, 150 species of edible fruits and 'walking palm trees'
- Good quality accommodation available
- Selection of wonderfully remote, rustic jungle lodges for wildlife viewing
- Ideal for adventure activities including white water rafting and horse riding
- Perfect for honeymoons and romantic getaways
- Great for families

→ Getting there

Flights from London Heathrow to San Jose via Europe (Madrid) with Iberia. Also flights from London Heathrow to San Jose via the United States (Miami, Dallas, Houston or Newark) with British Airways or Continental. Regional departures also available on request.

Prices from **£2,529** per person for a 14 night itinerary

See pages 75-78 for suggested itineraries and prices

Combinations

For those looking to combine the wildlife and adventure of Costa Rica with that of **Panama** or the rich and colourful cultures of **Guatemala** and **Mexico**, please refer to pages 22-29 for suggested country combination itineraries.





San Jose & Central Valley

Over two-thirds of Costa Rica's population live in the Central Valley area, a high plateau surrounded by mountains and volcanic peaks. The main cities of this area are San Jose, (the capital), and the three surrounding cities of Alajuela, Heredia & Cartago.

Founded in 1738, San Jose found wealth through tobacco, and later coffee trading, giving it the edge over Cartago the former capital, and the other two cities. After a period of conflict San Jose tentatively became the capital in 1823, and remains so today.

Twenty minutes from San Jose International airport (actually near Alajuela), at an altitude of 1,1161m, modern

San Jose is a bustling city with little classic architecture apart from the spectacular colonial National Theatre building and some colonial houses and villas. The Gold Museum with its pre-Columbian collection and The Jade Museum are also worth a visit if you are passing through. Far more enticing however, are the natural attractions of the Central Valley.



Hotel Grano de Oro

San Jose **BB**

Twenty-five minutes from the airport, the hotel Grano de Oro is located on a quiet street, an easy walk to the city centre. In the hotel there are 40 rooms (37 rooms & three suites). Rooms are individually and tastefully decorated in a colonial style, and non-smoking with ensuite bathroom, mini bar, direct dial telephone, safe deposit box, ceiling fan and cable TV. Some of the suites have a small terrace and one has a jacuzzi. There is also a roof terrace with jacuzzi and changing room, and an attractive courtyard with a fountain.

Other services and facilities available include laundry, currency exchange, free internet access, gift shop and secure parking. This hidden treasure in the centre of San Jose is full of character and charm and comes highly recommended.



Hotel Alta

Escazú, San Jose **BB**

The hotel is located 25 minutes from the airport and five miles west from the centre of San Jose. The property, with its classic Spanish colonial ambience, overlooks the city and valley. There are 18 deluxe rooms, six junior suites and a penthouse suite, some of which have a balcony and central valley views. The penthouse suite is perfect for honeymooners, featuring a king size bed. Jacuzzi, terrace and walk in shower.

Each of the individually designed rooms are air-conditioned and have private facilities (bath and shower). The Alta has a split-level restaurant which overlooks the swimming pool and gardens. The restaurant is regarded as one of the best in the country, though quite highly priced. For those looking for an characterful, comfortable hotel on the outskirts of San Jose, then look no further.



Finca Rosa Blanca

Santa Barbara de Heredia **BB**

This unique, hospitable, sophisticated property is situated 4,000 feet above sea level in the beautiful Central Valley. Surrounded by towering Higueron trees and exotic flora, the hotel offers spectacular views of the volcanoes, cloud forests and coffee plantations.

It also boasts an attractive swimming pool, and lunch and dinner are fixed menus. Ingredients often come from its own fruit orchards, and vegetable and herb gardens and food is either served in the restaurant or outside decking area with views over the valley.

Finca Rosa Blanca has 11 junior suites and two master suites. Four of the junior suites combine to provide two spacious villas. There is also a bar, reception area and spa.

This is an ideal location for honeymooners or those celebrating a special occasion.

Useful Notes

For further information on other hotels in San Jose and the Central Valley please see our website www.sunvil.co.uk



Three of Costa Rica's most famous volcanoes: Irazu; Turrialba; and Poas; lie in the Central Valley within two hours of San Jose. At 3,432m, 3,339m and 2,704m respectively, they nestle amongst farm lands and dense vegetation, ideal for walking and horse riding.

Two of the most spectacular white water rafting rivers, the Pacuare and Sarapiquí are also to be found in this area, winding down to the Caribbean sea through miles and miles of virgin, tropical rainforest. Near to Poas volcano are the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, a wonderful introduction to Costa Rica's flora and fauna with a butterfly house, an orchid garden, a frog house, a humming bird garden, and a trail to the waterfalls. It is also possible to visit a coffee

plantation in this area for those wanting to learn more about where their morning coffee comes from.

Near to Cartago are the Lankester Botanical Gardens founded in 1917 by an Englishman, Charles Lankester Wells, whose flora includes over 700 species of orchid. Also in this valley is the Inbio Institute, which celebrates Costa Rica's bio-diversity.



Xandari Plantation Resort and Spa

Near Alajuela **BB**

The Xandari is built on a coffee plantation overlooking the Central Valley. The unique design of each bungalow is in harmony with the natural setting. All (except one) of the bungalows have a large terrace with panoramic view and a walled-in patio for privacy.

All 22 bungalows have very colourful modern furnishings and private facilities (shower). The hotel has a beautiful Jalapa style spa offering massages, Jacuzzi, yoga and pilates. The small, informal restaurant has dramatic sweeping views over San Jose, perfect for taking in whilst enjoying a meal. It features several specialities and a variety of fruits and vegetables from the hotel's own organic gardens and orchards. Three large swimming pools serve the bungalows and the Xandari has a private trail complete with dramatic waterfalls, where clients can enjoy long walks.

Pacuare Jungle Lodge

Pacuare **FB**

After an exhilarating white water adventure on the Pacuare River (one of the world's premier white water rafting rivers) you will arrive at the lodge which sits upon the banks of the river. Each of the luxurious bungalows at the Pacuare Lodge has a private terrace, ensuite facilities and views to the lush garden or the river. After dark the bungalows are illuminated by candle light making it an exciting and romantic get away. The main lodge has a bar where the day's adventures can be discussed before enjoying a delicious meal in the communal dining area.

Depending on how many nights you are spending at the lodge you may have time to enjoy a canopy tour through the rainforest, to hike to the nearby waterfalls or simply relax and enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

On your final day at the lodge you will venture on to the river again as you raft through the last section of the river, this time riding through Class III-IV rapids. You will stop en route to explore the waterfalls and natural pools along the river bank and enjoy a picnic lunch on the Pacuare river. The final day is the most challenging and exciting and you will pass some of the most scenic areas. This lodge is highly recommended and a favourite of ours!

Please note that we do recommend a certain level of fitness to take part in the rafting and an ability to swim (buoyancy aids and helmets are provided). The lodge can also be accessed by a rough track if necessary. Children under 12 cannot participate in the rafting. Please ensure that your insurance covers you for white water rafting (up to Class IV).



Arenal

Arenal Lake, two and a half to three hours drive north from San Jose is overlooked by the perfect cone of the Arenal volcano, rising out of the dense, tropical rain forest. The volcano is currently active, belching out clouds of steam, smoke and lava on a regular basis.

A spectacular night time display on a clear evening is a breathtaking sight. The local town of La Fortuna sits at the foot of Arenal volcano. Offering a number of restaurants and good souvenir shops it has been become slightly commercialised.

This is a magical area for walking, riding and birdwatching. It is a high landscape, reminiscent of when the earth was

millions of years younger - only the dinosaurs are missing! It is possible to take guided walks to see the lava flows from a safe area, and also into the Arenal National Park.

Other popular attractions include the local hot springs, suspension bridge walks known as the Hanging Bridges of Arenal and boat trips on Arenal Lake.



Lost Iguana Resort

Arenal **BB**

The Lost Iguana Resort is wonderfully situated overlooking the Arenal volcano. All 41 rooms are spacious (particularly the luxury suites with Jacuzzi and family villas) and well-appointed with volcano views attractive furnishings, safe deposit box, air conditioning, telephone, cable TV and private balcony.

This 100 acre property also features an open air restaurant, the 'Palapa' bar, laundry facility and a swimming pool incorporating a swim up bar. There are private trails from the hotel that lead to the Arenal Hanging Bridges. Highly recommended.



Arenal Nayara Hotel and Gardens

Arenal **BB**

With spectacular views of the volcano the Arenal Nayara is ideally situated. The hotel offers guests a high level of comfort and style.

All 24 deluxe rooms have a king or two queen size beds, air conditioning, Jacuzzi, ensuite facilities, TV, out door shower and private balcony with volcano views.

In the lush tropical gardens there is a pool, three Jacuzzi's and a wet bar. The hotel's Acantha Spa offers a range of treatments including a massage using minerals from the volcano. The open air restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers spectacular views of the Arenal volcano.



Arenal Kioro Suites & Spa

Arenal **BB**

A stylish addition to the hotels in the Arenal area, Arenal Kioro Suites and Spa offers luxurious suites with wonderful views over lush gardens to the volcano. The 53 suites are in small blocks stretched out in a line so as to offer good views throughout, and each room has a terrace, a jacuzzi, a king or two queen size beds, ensuite facilities, air conditioning, coffee maker, telephone, TV, hair-dryer and safe deposit box.

Set in the grounds are two elegant swimming pools, a private hot springs and pools, colonial style courtyard area with seating for admiring the view, and the wonderfully relaxing Spa Neidin. The hotel bar and the Heliconias Restaurant also both offer spectacular views of the volcano especially on clear nights.



Monteverde

Monteverde cloud forest reserve is situated on a plateau 3,500 feet above sea level. The unmade track to Monteverde makes for a bone-shaking journey but it is well worth the trip if you are interested in wildlife - particularly birding. Guided walks through the reserve are available at night as well as during the day.

The Santa Elena Reserve is just as good for animal and birdlife and you may find that you will have a quieter walk through the cloudforest than at Monteverde. There has been talk of paving the road from the

Interamericana to Monteverde. Many locals have opposed this idea as, understandably, they fear it would change the area for the worse.



Fonda Vela

Fonda Vela Lodge

Monteverde Cloud Forest **BB**

This lodge is only a short distance from the Cloud Forest. The 40 rooms all have with hot water and shower. The main restaurant specialises in local Costa Rican cooking and ingredients come straight from the organic garden. There is also a smaller more intimate restaurant (best booked in advance).

The grounds of the Fonda Vela contain many high avocado trees, a favourite fruit of the resplendent Quetzal. Horseriding is available at the Lodge and Cloud Forest excursions (day and night) can also be booked (at a supplement).



Useful Notes

Selvatura Canopy tour Monteverde

If you fancy a thrill whilst on holiday then this is the place! This gives you the opportunity to travel on a pulley harness attached to fixed ropes across the top of the jungle canopy between tree platforms. It is built entirely inside virgin cloud forest with a total of 18 zip lines. A canopy walkway, and hummingbird and butterfly garden are also available at the same location.

Canopy tours are also available in other areas including Arenal and Manuel Antonio. Please check whether your insurance covers this activity.



Hummingbird

Over 50 species of hummingbird have been recorded in Costa Rica. These birds are always fascinating to watch. They can flap their wings up to 80 times per second, thus producing the hum for which they are named. The speed of wing combined with the ability to rotate the whole wing, enables them to hover in place when feeding on the nectar from flowers. They are generally quite aggressive birds and will do anything to defend their feeding territory!

Sarapiquí

Carpeted with fruit plantations, Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí bears more resemblance to the steamy and tropical Caribbean lowlands than the plains of the north. Despite significant deforestation, it still houses some of the best preserved primary rainforest in the country.

This is an excellent area for the wildlife and nature enthusiast with La Selva Biological Station, Braulio Carrillo National Park and Rara Avis private rainforest reserves all located nearby.

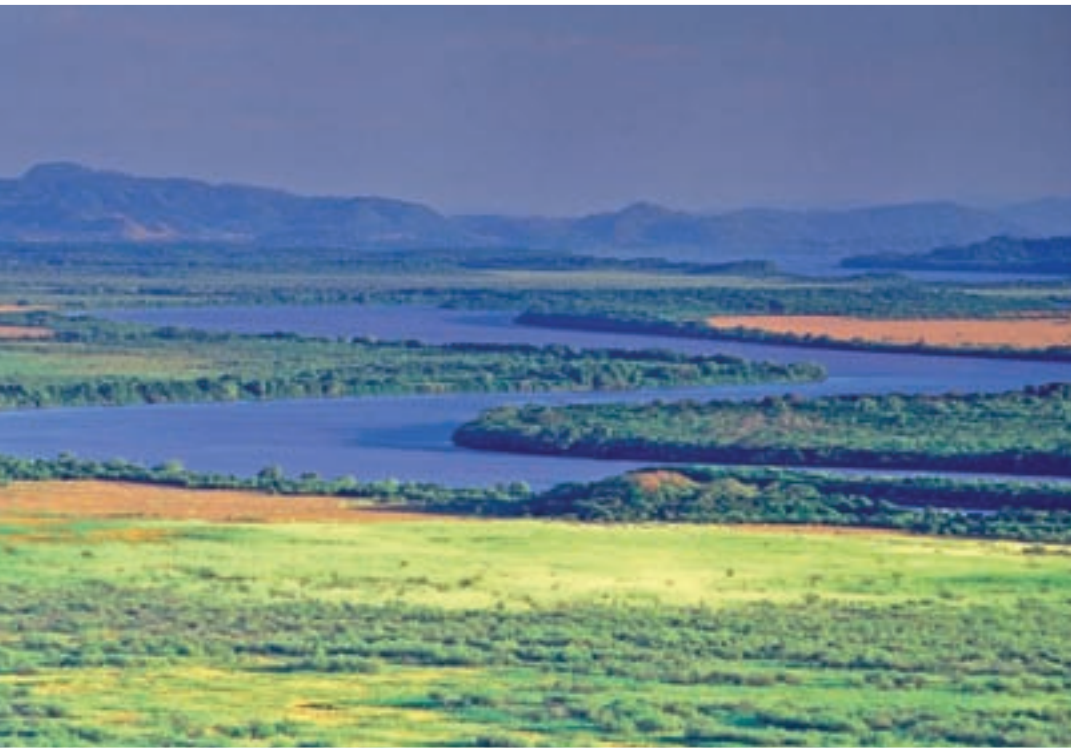


La Quinta Da Sarapiquí Country Inn

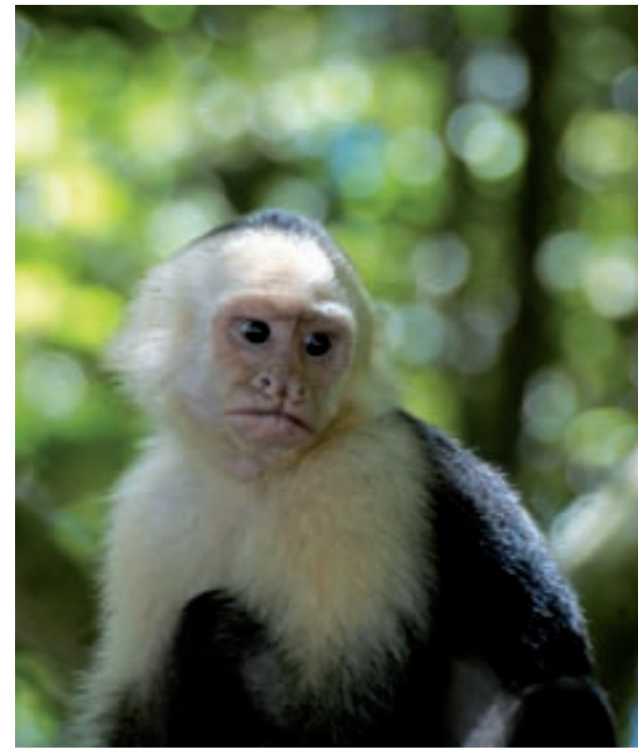
Sarapiquí **BB**

This hacienda-style hotel on the banks of the River Sardinal, is surrounded by a garden which is over-flowing with ginger and palms. It is owned and managed by a Costa Rican family. The 32 bungalow-style rooms have ceiling fans, private facilities (shower) and hot water. The restaurant serves tasty food including rice, beans and vegetables from the lodge's own garden. The property offers river and pool swimming, mountain biking, fishing, canoeing, horse-riding, walking and boat rides (organised activities are at a supplement).

The area is particularly good for bird watching - trogons, fruit crows and black-throated wrens are some of the 400 species that have been recorded in the area (50% of the bird species of Costa Rica). The property is ideally located for exploring the Braulio Carrillo National Park and La Selva Biological Station. A simple property but clean and comfortable, with friendly service.



Palo Verde National Park



Caño Negro

Caño Negro is one of the premier areas in the Americas to observe huge concentrations of both migratory and indigenous birds, along with reptilian river wildlife. The refuge is the only location in Costa Rica where the Nicaraguan Grackle regularly nests.

Caño Negro is created by the seasonal flooding of the River Frio so, depending upon what time of the year you visit, you may find yourself travelling around a broad lake in a motorboat or walking along mud-caked riverbeds. The rainy season is May-November when Caño Negro is at its fullest. However, the rainy season is not necessarily the best time to see most wildlife. The best time for birders is considered to be from January until March, when most migratory species of birds are in residence. Caño Negro is approximately 2 hours 15 minute drive from the Arenal area and 3 hours from Sarapiquí.

For keen wildlife lovers it is possible to stay at **Caño Negro Natural Lodge** (please see our website).



Palo Verde

From Hacienda La Ensenada Lodge in Abangaritos it is possible to visit Palo Verde National Park. It was created in 1982 to serve as a bird sanctuary for resident and migrating waterfowl as well as forest birds.

During the dry season (December-May) the area can be reduced to mud flats. However, considerable flooding in the wet season gives rise to salt and freshwater lakes and mangrove swamps. It is mainly of interest to serious birdwatchers. The best months are January-March when most of the bird species are in residence. A number of circular trails run through the park. The Organisation for Tropical Studies (OTS) has a field station at Palo Verde.



Hacienda La Ensenada Lodge

Abangaritos [FB](#)

Located on the Pacific Coast in the province of Puntarenas, this 350 hectare working ranch affords wonderful views out over the Gulf of Nicoya.

Hiking through the dry forest on one of the four marked trails allows guests to experience the different habitats of the reserve and provides the opportunity to view some of the 125 bird species as well as monkeys. An essential part of the stay here will be a boat tour along the canals of the Abangares River, going deep into the mangrove forests amongst waterfowl such as herons, pelicans and egrets. Crocodiles and iguanas can also be seen.

The accommodation consists of 20, simply furnished wooden rooms. The 'family style' restaurant serves mainly Costa Rican and Italian dishes. There is also a bar area and swimming pool.

Rincon de la Vieja

This beautiful national park is named after the active Rincon volcano which is the main attraction. It is a mixture of tropical dry forest and deciduous trees.

There are boiling mud pools (listen out for strange bubbling sounds) and steam vents wherever you go. Due to its remoteness, the park is not heavily visited.

The wildlife is extremely varied. More than 200 species of birds have been recorded here, including bellbirds, toucans, parrots, eagles and motmots. Mammals include deer, skunks, coatis, peccaries, armadillos and three species of monkey.



Hotel Borinquen

Rincon de la Vieja [BB](#)

Set in the picturesque mountains of the Rincon de la Vieja volcano, Hotel Borinquen is the perfect place for rest and relaxation. It also offers a wide array of outdoor activities; natural spring pools, forest hikes, thermal sauna, mud baths, canopy tour and horse-riding. It provides spacious bungalows and villas that combine rustic charm with conveniences such as hot water, air conditioning and TV.

There is also a restaurant serving national and international cuisine and a bar. The property also has its own emergency lighting system. Due to its remote location we strongly recommend that you hire a vehicle. The hotel is normally very quiet with only a few bungalows occupied at any given time.

Please note that the tours bookable through the hotel include a handling fee and therefore tend to be quite expensive.



Tortuguero

The high mountains of the central range fall away eastwards through coffee and sugar cane plantations and rain forest to the vast Caribbean plain of banana plantations, marshlands and high, tropical forests rivalling those of the Amazon basin.

In Tortuguero National Park, the handful of lodges are set amidst the jungle and the whole area is bordered by miles of forest fringed beach where thousands of Green Turtles lay their eggs between July and October. September and October are the only months to see the whole cycle (egg laying and hatching).

From April to May Leatherbacks also lay in small numbers. Hawksbill nest sporadically from March to October.

As you travel through the canal waterways, a new sight awaits you round every bend. A vast array of brightly coloured birds, monkeys, sloths, caiman and iguanas surround you. There is beauty, movement and variety everywhere you look. Group guided canal trips and jungle hikes are included and more excursions are available to book and pay locally.



Mawamba Lodge

Tortuguero [FB](#)

One of smaller and more comfortable lodges, it has 58 cabins, all with private facilities (shower) including four honeymoon suites. The suites have private terrace, king size bed and corner bath. There is a swimming pool.

A variety of bird watching and jungle trips are included, and it is only a short walk to the village and to Tortuguero Beach, the nesting place (between July and October) of tens of thousands of Green Turtles.



Manatus Lodge

Tortuguero [FB](#)

The most luxurious lodge within Tortuguero and also the smallest. Situated overlooking the canal waterways, in a location which offers 180° panoramic views of the water and jungle, this lodge is an excellent option for those looking to explore the wildlife and jungle in comfort.

The 12 spacious rooms are all furnished to a high standard with the only lodge to offer air conditioning in Tortuguero. All rooms feature mini bar, TV, en suite bathroom and mosquito nets over the beds. The restaurant named 'Ara Macaw' focuses on Afro-Caribbean flavours combined with fresh ingredients and locally caught seafood. The lodge's 'Morpho' bar is an excellent place to relax with a cocktail and discuss the day's activities whilst watching the sunset.

Evergreen Lodge

Tortuguero [FB](#)

This lodge is found in a secluded, quiet location in the North-eastern corner of the National Park, five minutes by boat from the main Park entrance. The lodge sits adjacent to one of the many canals and in dense jungle which makes it an excellent base to explore the waterways and jungle trails, and spot the abundant wildlife. 24 new rooms have been recently built to compliment the original 31 rustic cabanas set along boardwalks amongst the tropical forest. All incorporate private bathrooms (with shower) and ceiling fans. The lodge has a restaurant, bar and a swimming pool set in amongst a garden area, and surrounded by forest. Don't be surprised to be woken up by the Howler monkeys when staying here!

Useful Notes

Tortuguero

The diverse habitats of Tortuguero National Park provide excellent opportunities to see a huge variety of birdlife from the waders and sea birds of mangroves and coastal areas, to the more colourful species of the lowland wet-forest. The Great Potoo is a rare nocturnal predator, related to the nightjar whose daytime camouflage gives it the more fitting epithet; 'Broken Stick Bird'.

Tortuguero Lodges

Local boat excursions are included at all lodges. Please note all rooms are basic and the walls tend to be quite thin. Hot water can be patchy!

Tortuguero is very geared to groups and therefore you should not be surprised if the lodges are busy and noisy at times.



Reptiles

The spectacled caiman averages about 1m in length and can often be seen in Tortuguero whilst out on the canals. The much larger crocodile can be seen near the Carara reserve on the Pacific coast.

The bright green basilisk lizard can sometimes be spotted on or near water. Nicknamed 'Jesus Christ Lizard', it can literally run across water on its hind legs!

There are eight species of marine turtles in the world, six nest in Costa Rica. The turtles give Tortuguero National Park its name.



The ferry from Puntarenas to the Nicoya Peninsula

Nicoya Peninsula

The eighty minute ferry trip across the Gulf of Nicoya from Puntarenas is an opportunity to enjoy the views and chat to fellow passengers. Despite the presence of various resort developments in Tambor, the whole area still retains a 'remote feel' and the village itself is friendly and 'laid-back'. Alternatively it is a 25 minute flight to Tambor airstrip from San Jose.

Opposite Isla Alcatraz the small, privately owned Curu reserve fringed with white sand beaches protects a wide variety of flora and fauna. Curu require advance warning of any visits. The Cabo Blanco Reserve occupies the entire southwest tip of the peninsula. Here are monkeys, squirrels, sloths, agoutis and a variety of snakes! There is a 2 hour trail through the forest. With a four-wheel drive in

the dry season (can be impassable in the rainy season) it is possible to head north to Playa Bejuco, Tamarindo and beyond. It is also possible to take a flight from San Jose to an airstrip between Playa Samara and Playa Carrillo and then transfer to Hotel Punta Islita 8km south of Playa Carrillo. The Nicoya Peninsula is a perfect destination to explore the many beaches.



Punta Islita

Playa Bejuco **BB**

This small and intimate property, perched on a hill surrounded by mountains and overlooking the Pacific Ocean is often considered to be the best hotel in Costa Rica. The hotel is a member of the small luxury hotels of the world consortium and is perfect for honeymooners.

The restaurant enjoys excellent views of the ocean and the swimming pool is located alongside. The property has 35 air-conditioned bungalows each with ceiling fan, terrace, ocean view and hammock. Four open plan suites have the same amenities as the bungalows, with the addition of a jacuzzi on the private terrace overlooking the ocean.

Additionally, there are five air-conditioned 'casitas', (one bedroom apartments) each with private pool and ocean view. There are three private villas in the grounds for up to six persons. The private beach is about 200 metres from the main building, where the Borrancho Club serves snacks and drinks during the high season.

Useful Notes

Ostional National Refuge
8km from the Nosara, this is one of the most important nesting grounds in the country for Olive Ridley turtles who come ashore to lay their eggs between July and

November. The leatherback and Pacific green turtle also nest here in smaller numbers. Iguanas, crabs, howler monkeys, coatis and many birds can also be observed.



Lagarta Lodge

Nosara **BB**

Set on a hill about 40 metres above sea level, this simple but charming Lodge offers magnificent views of the Ostional coastline, the mountains and the mouth of the river Nosara. It boasts its own private biological reserve, where clients can walk on trails through the mangroves and humid forest, observing the animals and nature. The seven rustic rooms are comfortable and all have private facilities (shower) and fan.

Breakfast is included and the restaurant can provide light snacks in the evenings. Bar facilities are also available. The hotel has a small swimming pool and there is a steep path by the side of the hotel down to the beach. Olive Ridley turtles swarm ashore at Playa Ostional during full moons from July to November.



The Tango Mar Golf & Beach Resort

Playa Quisales near Tambor **BB**

Tango Mar is located 3km south of Tambor village, 40 mins drive from the ferry. This is an attractive, romantic and secluded beachfront resort. The extensive facilities include a swimming pool, nine-hole golf course, two floodlit tennis courts, stables, soccer pitch (may see the hotel team in action!), heli-pad, pool table, bar and restaurant.

The hotel is built on 50 hectares of property and some primary forest. It has a variety of beachfront rooms, different suites and large villas with air-conditioning, fans, satellite TV, mini-bar, safe deposit box, large showers and picture window balconies. Some rooms do not have an ocean view. Nearby is one of only seven waterfalls in the world to fall directly into the sea. Tours (Cabo Blanco and Curu Reserve) and walking trails are available and horse riding, boats, fishing and diving can be organised locally.



Carara Reserve and Esterillos

The ever popular Jaco was the first beach resort on the Pacific Coast and still attracts a mix of surfers, weekenders and holidaying Costa Ricans. It is a convenient stopover point for those travelling between Monteverde and Manuel Antonio or perhaps Manuel Antonio and the Nicoya Peninsula. Playas Esterillos Oeste and Este to the south are quieter, pleasant beaches.

The nearby Carara reserve lies at the meeting point of the dry and wet climatic zones. A variety of wildlife can be seen here such as trogons, scarlet macaws, toucans, monkeys, sloths and agoutis. The broad river that lines the reserve flows to a sweeping mangrove and wetland system that provides for

one of the nation's largest concentrations of birdlife. En route to Jaco, it is well worth stopping on the bridge over the mud flats of the River Tarcoles which is a good spot for seeing crocodiles and shorebirds, particularly at low tide.



Hotel Villa Caletas

Near Jacó /Punta Leona **BB**

One of the most individual, eccentric and exclusive hotels in Costa Rica, this colonial mansion style hotel is situated 1,000 feet above sea level, with 360 degree panoramic views of the Gulf of Nicoya and the Pacific coastline.

There is a marvellous amphitheatre in the hotel grounds where a cocktail can be enjoyed. In the main building, the bar, restaurant and lounge areas offer dramatic views over the sea and mountains. There are 45 rooms and suites all with private facilities (shower). For those with walking difficulties, please note that some of the rooms are an uphill walk from the hotel reception and facilities.

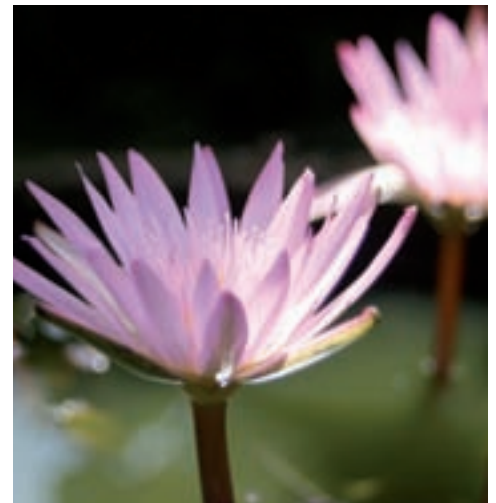


Xandari by the Pacific

Esterillos **BB**

This hotel enjoys a wonderful location, situated right on the beach of Playa Esterillos Este, approximately 2.5 hours from San Jose and 25 minutes from Jaco. It consists of spacious, air-conditioned private villas all with a large terrace from which to enjoy panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, a private walled-garden, sitting area, minibar and fan. The generous bathrooms feature a mosaic-tiled shower that opens to a private garden. Each villa is designed by owner and architect, Sherrill Broudy, with original paintings, mosaics and tapestries by artist Charlene Broudy.

The open-air thatched palm roof pavilion restaurant and bar has sweeping views of the beach and gardens from every table. The shell-strewn, long, expansive and scenic beach is perfect for walking, jogging, exploring and sunbathing. Dramatic waves have made this a renowned surfing beach. There's ample shade under the palm & almond trees, plus umbrellas for lounging, & there's almost always a refreshing breeze. The sky at sunset is breathtaking. Ideally located for visiting the Carara and Manuel Antonio National Parks. Activities include sea kayaking, horseriding, snorkelling, surfing and Mangrove river tours to name but a few (payable locally).



Useful Notes

Surfing in Costa Rica

With 700 miles of coastline and near consistent year round surf, Costa Rica is popular amongst surfers, and it is host to several international surfing tournaments. Popular areas include Tamarindo, Malpais, Santa Teresa and parts of the Central Pacific. Call for more details.





Manuel Antonio

From the central mountain range where San Jose is situated, the land falls away westwards down to the drier, warmer Pacific side of the country.

The superb national park of Manuel Antonio, with its picturesque beaches fringed with tropical dry forest and the resort of Quepos with its hotels and restaurants set in dense vegetation, is a four hour drive from San Jose.

This is an excellent centre for a variety of activities such as deep sea sport fishing, diving, snorkelling, bird-watching and general wildlife observation.



El Parador Resort Hotel

Manuel Antonio **BB**

Nestling in the midst of the densely forested Punta Quepos, the casually elegant Hotel El Parador opened in the middle of 1995. Situated on a cliff it commands excellent views of the sea below. A regular minibus service to the nearby beach is provided, and there is also a path from the hotel to another beach.

Amenities include two swimming pools (including a separate adult pool), games room, lounge, tennis court, mini gym, as well as a restaurant and bar. Tastefully decorated throughout in the Spanish colonial style, the rooms and suites are spacious and well appointed. All have private facilities and are air-conditioned. The standard rooms have a shower, while the suites have jacuzzi, bath and shower.



Arenas del Mar Beach and Nature Reserve

Manuel Antonio **BB**

In our opinion this represents some of the most comfortable accommodation in Manuel Antonio. The hotel is spread over a large plot of land, boasting incredible views of the national park and the ocean.

Most rooms have a king or two queen size beds, TV, mini bar, safe deposit box and a private viewing deck with breathtaking views. The Ocean and Rainforest view suites all have a private hot tub from where you can watch the sunset over the Pacific Ocean.

The hotel has an excellent restaurant with lovely views over the ocean below. There is also a beach side snack bar where you can enjoy a refreshing juice and sample local foods. The hotels spa is a perfect place to unwind after an exciting day exploring the national park.

Golf buggy transportation is provided on-site to assist guests.



Tulemar Bungalows

Manuel Antonio **BB**

The bungalows are set in a fabulous 33 acre private reserve which hugs the slopes down to an idyllic, small, sandy beach.

Accommodation is in fourteen, 645 sq ft. bungalows with large bedrooms with two double beds, TV, wall safe, telephone and air conditioning. Bathrooms are large (shower only) and the living room (three ceiling fans) have two more sofa beds and substantial kitchenette with fridge, microwave and two cooking rings. The bathroom can be accessed from both bedroom and living room. There are panoramic windows all round from which there are stunning views through tropical tree tops to the sea and forested coastline.

Breakfast is taken at the bar area of the infinity swimming pool. Monkeys, sloths, toucans, scarlet tanagers and green parakeets are often in evidence. Guided nature tours (payable locally) are arranged around the reserve, as are boat trips.



San Gerado de Dota

San Gerado is a small little farming hamlet tucked into a valley of orchards, trout-filled streams and a large population of Quetzals, one of the most spectacular of the Trogon bird species.

Quetzals have been reported here regularly every April and May (during breeding season) but are often seen during the rest of the year as well. The trout fishing in the River Savegre is also very good.



El Trogon Lodge

San Gerado de Dota (Cerro de la Muerte) 

85 kms south east of San Jose and at an altitude of 7,000 ft, this is the perfect location from which to explore this area, the natural habitat for an immense diversity of flora and fauna. The resplendent Quetzal remains here year round. These highlands are Costa Rica's largest protected area (95,000 hectares). The Cipresillo oak, mountain nettle and blueberry are all endemic to this area. There are hundreds of bromeliads, mosses, ferns and orchids. Birds abound, with trogons, fly catchers, humming birds and finches much in evidence.

The lodge has 22 heated, rustic but comfortable rooms, all with private bathrooms (shower). The new junior suite enjoys complete privacy set high up above the estate with a balcony and Jacuzzi. Room service is available upon request. This lodge would not be suitable for those with walking difficulties as there are a lot of steps. There is a homely restaurant serving delicious home cooked meals. There are three walking trails to suit all fitness levels. There is also a canopy tour at the property. Horse-riding is also available at a supplement. It tends to be very cold at night here so several layers of clothing may be required. Magical!

Ballena National Marine Park

Situated almost the same distance between Manuel Antonio and the Osa Peninsula, the Ballena National Marine Park encompasses 270 acres of land and 13,300 acres of ocean (5,400 marine hectares). It also contains the largest coral reef on the Pacific side of Central America around Isla Ballena.

There are wonderful beaches and great opportunities for swimming and snorkelling in the clear waters, as well as kayaking through the mangroves. Isla Ballena can be visited as can Caño Island with its spectacular beach

and snorkelling / diving opportunities. Humpback whales are often seen in the area between December and April, and Olive Ridley and Hawksbill turtles also visit.



Cristal Ballena Resort

Playa Ballena 

Close to the Ballena National Marine Park on the Pacific coast and over looked by rainforest covered mountains, Cristal Ballena Resort is beautifully situated. Set in 12 hectares grounds with rainforest trails, it is visited by a wide variety of birds and other wildlife.

The 19 rooms include 14 spacious junior suites, three master suites and two family suites, all with a balcony and ocean views. All have private facilities, air-conditioning, telephone, TV, minibar, safe deposit box, coffee maker and hairdryer. The junior suites have either a king sized, two queen sized, or one queen sized and one single bed. The master suites have two queen sized beds, the family suites one king and two singles.

Within the expansive gardens is a large swimming pool with the Pura Vida café and restaurant conveniently close by.

Activities available from here include whale watching in season, kayaking through mangroves, snorkelling or diving by Caño Island, and surfing.





Osa Peninsula & South Pacific Coast

This region is undoubtedly one of Sunvil's all time favourites! Located on the Osa Peninsula, Corcovado has earned a reputation for some of the nation's best wildlife viewing. Furthermore, due to its remote location, it benefits from being less frequented by visitors compared to other parts of the country.

It includes 13 separate ecosystems, almost 1000 species of trees and nearly 400 species of birds. Corcovado has been called 'the most biologically intense place on earth' by no less an authority than the National Geographic Society. Here, amongst the largest trees of Costa Rica, can be found the densest population of tapirs, jaguars, monkeys, bats, toucans and scarlet macaws. It should be noted that cats are a very rare sight in Costa Rica due to the dense

vegetation. Offshore lies Caño Island, an ancient Indian burial ground, offering beautiful, white sandy beaches sheltered by coconut palms and excellent snorkelling opportunities among coral reefs where dolphins and whales can sometimes be seen. Drake Bay is located on the northern Pacific coast of the Osa Peninsula and serves as another good base from which to explore the Corcovado National Park and Caño Island Marine Reserve.



Corcovado Jungle Lodge

Corcovado National Park  Closed 1 September-mid November every year (dates subject to change)

Tucked away in the trees and cooled by the Pacific Ocean, this remote Lodge is a 170 acre private reserve bordering Corcovado National Park. Carefully designed, this unique lodge offers basic accommodation constructed with the highest regard for conservation and in harmony with the landscape and the environment.

There are no roads leading to Corcovado Jungle Lodge as access is only by motor launch from the remote town of Sierpe. Please note that the transfer travels down the River Sierpe viewing mangrove wetlands and then joins the Pacific Ocean. This trip is great fun, sometimes bumpy and you may spot some whales en route! Upon arrival at the lodge it will be a wet landing on the beach as you'll be up to your thighs in water!




West Landing Casa Corcovado

This is followed by a tractor transfer to the top. The accommodation consists of simple, tiled floor bungalows with shower and ceiling fans. Please note that none of the bungalows have ocean views. There are also two Junior Suite Bungalows specially designed for honeymooners. The lodge, supplied by mountain spring water, is surrounded by virgin rainforest and fruit trees which draw birds, monkeys and other animals. The Lodge includes a guided full day tour to the National Park and a full day excursion to Caño Island. Scuba diving trips are also available locally (at an extra cost).

Corcovado Foundation

This foundation supports and improves the existing conservation efforts of the Osa Peninsula. Sunvil Traveller will contribute \$10 per person to the Corcovado Foundation for every Sunvil client who stays at Corcovado Jungle Lodge. See page 20 for more details.

La Paloma Lodge

Near Drake Bay  Closed in September and October (dates subject to change)

From an elevated, hilltop position with views of Drake Bay, La Paloma Lodge also benefits from the breeze which cools the whole property. With 4 standard rooms and 5, more spacious, split-level bungalows with superb views (which are ideal for families), the lodge has an intimate, personal feel to it and the owners are on hand to take special care of their guests. There is a good dive shop and training facilities for those with little or no experience. The swimming pool and restaurant areas are perched on the hill with excellent views of the bay and the forest which surrounds the lodge. The lodge can be reached by plane or by boat.

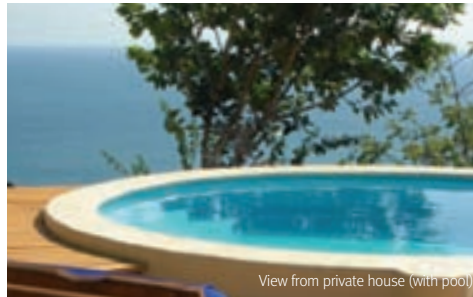
The lodge includes a full day tour with guide to Corcovado National Park and a full day excursion to Caño Island. Other activities (payable locally) include horseriding, hiking and scuba diving.

Useful Notes

Scuba Diving

Suitable for both novice and intermediate divers, with water temperatures averaging between 21 and 28°C and visibility generally ranging between 10-30 metres, Caño Island forms part of a marine reserve covering 5,800 hectares of ocean. Here divers can explore coral beds and

towering rock formations covered with mazes, peaks and valleys as well as caves serving as nurseries for white tip sharks. There is a good chance of seeing all kinds of marine life including grouper, snapper, giant amberjack, moorish idols, pufferfish, surgeon fish and stingray.



View from private house (with pool)



Bosque del Cabo Hotel

Osa Peninsula **FB**

Bosque del Cabo is a relaxed and secluded hideaway surrounded by a 300 acre forest reserve. It is owned and operated by a North American family. Located at the southernmost cape of the peninsula, it is reached by flying into Puerto Jimenez and taking a 60 minute 4x4 transfer to the lodge. Birding here is excellent and hikes can be taken on marked trails through the forest to the ocean and a waterfall. This is a beautiful area for walking, fishing or simply relaxing by the pool, enjoying the wildlife. Humpback whales are also known to visit between December and March.

There are four standard and six deluxe bungalows, all privately located amidst the delightful gardens which attract a wide variety of wildlife. All have a terrace area with hammocks and easy chairs along with modern bathrooms and unique outdoor showers! The deluxe cabins are slightly larger. For families there is 'La Casa' a classic 2000 square-foot hacienda-style house. This comprises of a large lounge area, two separate bedrooms with ensuite bathroom, terrace and fully equipped kitchen.

The solar-powered open air restaurant serves tasty cuisine in a friendly atmosphere. The attractive swimming pool is naturally filled by a spring and has a poolside bar.

Trails explore the rainforest where you can enjoy natural pools and waterfalls along with an abundance of wildlife. Also available locally are yoga, massage, surfing, kayaking, deep-sea fishing, sailboat trips and horse-riding. This small and intimate lodge is suitable for both couples and families and is highly recommended. Wonderful for honeymooners.



Useful Notes

Tiskita Foundation

The Aspinall Family has long been a force in environmental education and protection in Costa Rica. Peter Aspinall, a native Costa Rican with a Canadian and US education, manages Tiskita Jungle Lodge and biological reserve. The Tiskita Foundation is a non-profit organisation for land/culture conservation and education of those who live in the area. The

Foundation has already purchased 125 acres of land for reforestation, assisted in financing of the Punta Banco Health Clinic in the village and continues to donate school supplies to the village school. Sunvil Latin America will contribute \$10 per person to the Tiskita Foundation, for every Sunvil client who stays at Tiskita Jungle Lodge.

Tiskita Jungle Lodge

Punta Banco **FB** Closed 15 September - 15 October every year (dates subject to change). Local tours included.

This family run lodge is located in the middle of a private, 400 acre rain forest reserve, in the remote area of Golfito, on the South Pacific coast. To reach Tiskita, take a flight to Golfito and then it is a private transfer to the lodge (approximately 1.25hrs). Tiskita is surrounded by virgin rainforest and has a coastline with tide pools and beaches suitable for swimming. It is located 10km from the Panama border. Please note this is a hot and humid area.

There is an experimental fruit farm with over 100 varieties of tropical fruit from all over the world. Guests are able to sample dozens of exotic fruits and fruit drinks during their visit. Its wild coastline, steamy jungle and virgin rainforest are home to a wealth of wildlife such as monkeys, sloths, iguana, bats, ocelots, anteaters, coatis and toucans. There are over 275 species of birds recorded and this is nothing less than a bird watcher's paradise. Guided walks and horseback tours into the rainforest allow close up viewing, although your own verandah also affords a great vantage point.

The 16 rooms are of a rustic nature, with basic private outside bathrooms allowing rainforest views and wildlife spotting as you shower! Home cooked Costa Rican food is enjoyed alongside other guests in the main lodge which hosts the dining room, bar area and small library. There is a small swimming pool and a five minute walk brings you to deserted beaches and tide pools. There is a protected five kilometers stretch of beach below the reserve, the nesting site of ridley, green and leatherback turtles (July-November). Tiskita is without doubt a complete nature experience. Highly recommended.



Hidden Gems

On this page you will find a selection of lodges that offer an exciting alternative for the more adventurous. Ideal for travellers seeking a real wildlife experience off the beaten track, they offer a more 'up close and personal' wildlife-watching holiday. Please check that your travel insurance covers you for any chosen activity.



Rakifi Safari Lodge

Nr. Manuel Antonio [FB](#)

The Rakifi Safari Lodge is located south of Manuel Antonio on the banks of the Rio Savegre. The lodge was originally set up as a wildlife refuge and tapir re-introduction centre, with an emphasis on sustainable tourism. The lodge is passionate about supporting the local community by providing employment, and educating guests about the wildlife in the area.

There are six luxury safari tents, based on African-style tents, allowing guests to get close to the wildlife whilst keeping the insects at bay. Each tent has hard wood floors, comfortable beds, ensuite facilities and a viewing deck. The tents can sleep up to four people, making them ideal for families.

There are a number of pre-bookable activity packages available, including options such as white water rafting, kayaking, hiking and horse riding.



Luna Lodge

Osa Peninsula [FB](#)

This pristine and secluded lodge is located on the Osa Peninsula close to Corcovado National Park. It is spread over 150 acres, 75 of which are primary rainforest, so it is possible to spot many species of bird, including the scarlet macaw. Monkeys, tayras and coatis can also be seen wandering through the grounds.

There are eight bungalows, all with two double beds, ensuite facilities and a private deck from which you can enjoy the jungle dawn chorus. There are also three rooms closer to the main lodge, all with private bathroom.

Excursions can be arranged from the lodge. They include guided walks, kayaking, horse riding and guided tours to Corcovado National Park.



Playa Nicuesa Rainforest Lodge

Golfo Dulce [FB](#)

Located within the Golfo Dulce and accessible only by boat, this lodge is ideal for those seeking total escape, surrounded by beautiful scenery. The accommodation is divided between private rooms and cabins (ideal for families). All have private bathroom facilities and fantastic jungle views.

Perfect for wildlife lovers, sports enthusiasts or for those wishing to relax completely, the lodge offers a wide range of activity options.





Suggested Itineraries

Below are some suggested itineraries for a varied and enjoyable holiday in Costa Rica.

Please note that these are only suggested itineraries and prices to give you an idea of what we do - please feel free to tailor your itinerary, simply call us and we will do the rest!

Prices quoted include international flights from London Heathrow with British Airways and American Airlines (via Miami) and local airport transfers in Costa Rica. A 4x4 vehicle can be included in most of the itineraries to give freedom and independence. All itineraries are available with transfers throughout (quotes on request if needed).

Accommodation basis at all hotels is as described in the itineraries (standard room unless otherwise stated) and is based on 2 sharing a twin/double room. (Quotes for more than 2 people also available upon request.)

Please note that for itineraries including transfers by boat or internal flights, there are luggage weight restrictions of 12kg per person. Excess luggage will need to remain with our local agent and you will be reunited with your luggage at the earliest opportunity.

Where car hire is applicable, the itineraries include local 100% CDW cover (see car hire section on page 79). Depending on the itinerary, you will either be taken to the local car hire office to collect your vehicle or the car will be delivered to your hotel. The vehicle will generally be collected from the hotel on the evening of your last day of hire.

For itinerary prices - please see page 78.

Highlights of Costa Rica

14 NIGHTS

Private transfers and self drive.

- San Jose 3 nights (total) BB
- Tortuguero 3 nights FB
- Arenal 2 nights BB
- Monteverde 2 nights BB
- Manuel Antonio 4 nights BB

Day 1 Upon arrival into San Jose, private transfer to the hotel. Overnight: Xandari Plantation, Alajuela (prima plus villa) BB

Day 2 Privately guided tour to Poas Volcano and La Paz Waterfalls (lunch inc). Overnight: Xandari Plantation, Alajuela (prima plus villa)

Day 3 Early morning group transfer to Siquirres. Continue by group guided transfer (minibus/boat) through the Costa Rica banana and coffee plantations to Tortuguero Overnight: Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero FB

Day 4 Enjoy wildlife spotting canal trips Overnight: Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero

Day 5 Day at leisure Overnight: Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero

Day 6 Take a short boat transfer to the airstrip and fly to San Jose. Upon arrival, met and private transfer to Arenal. Overnight: Lost Iguana Resort, Arenal BB

Day 7 Enjoy a half day group* guided tour of the Arenal Hanging Bridges. Afternoon at leisure. Overnight: Lost Iguana Resort

Day 8 Private land - boat - land crossing across Lake Arenal to Monteverde. Overnight: Fonda Vela Lodge (junior suite) BB

Day 9 Enjoy a half day group* guided visit to the Monteverde Cloud Forest. Overnight: Fonda Vela Lodge (junior suite)

Day 10 Now, it's time to relax on a beach!! Private transfer to Manuel Antonio. Overnight: Arenas del Mar (superior ocean breeze room) BB

Day 11 Manuel Antonio National Park group* guided tour. Overnight Arenas del Mar (superior ocean breeze room)

Day 12 Day at leisure. Overnight Arenas del Mar (superior ocean breeze room)

Day 13 Day at leisure. Overnight Arenas del Mar (superior ocean breeze room)

Day 14 Private transfer to San Jose. Overnight: Grano de Oro, San Jose (superior room) BB

Day 15 Private transfer to the airport for flights back to the UK.



Wildlife Itinerary

14 NIGHTS

Private transfers and excursions. Upgrades available at some hotels at a supplement

- San Jose 2 nights (total) BB
- Tortuguero 2 nights FB
- Tiskita 3 nights FB
- San Gerardo de Dota 2 nights FB
- Sarapiquí 2 nights BB
- Arenal 1 night BB
- Abangaritos 2 nights FB

Day 1 Met at the airport. Private transfer to the hotel. Don Carlos (superior room), San Jose BB (see website)

Day 2 Early morning group guided transfer to Tortuguero (minibus/boat). Enjoy guided Group wildlife spotting trips. Overnight: Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero FB

Day 3 Enjoy wildlife spotting canal trips. Overnight: Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero

Day 4 Short boat transfer to the airstrip for flights to Tiskita (via San Jose and Puerto Jimenez). Met at the lodge. Overnight: Tiskita Jungle Lodge Punta Banco FB

Day 5 Day at leisure or join guided group walks through the grounds spotting birds and other wildlife. Overnight: Tiskita Jungle Lodge

Day 6 Day at leisure or join group guided walks through the grounds spotting birds and other wildlife. Overnight: Tiskita Jungle Lodge

Day 7 Take a flight back to San Jose (via Puerto Jimenez/Palmar Sur). Private transfer upon arrival to San Gerardo de Dota. Overnight: El Trogon Lodge, San Gerardo de Dota FB

Day 8 Morning guided group* walk in the cloud forest to try to spot the famous Quetzal bird. Overnight: El Trogon Lodge, San Gerardo de Dota

Day 9 Private transfer to Sarapiquí. Evening Group Bat Tour to La Tirimbina Reserve (dinner inc). Overnight: La Quinta Country Inn, Sarapiquí BB

Day 10 Enjoy a privately guided tour of La Selva Biological Station (lunch included). Overnight: La Quinta Country Inn, Sarapiquí

Day 11 Private transfer to Arenal. Afternoon guided group* tour to Volcano and hot springs (dinner inc). Overnight: Lost Iguana, Arenal BB

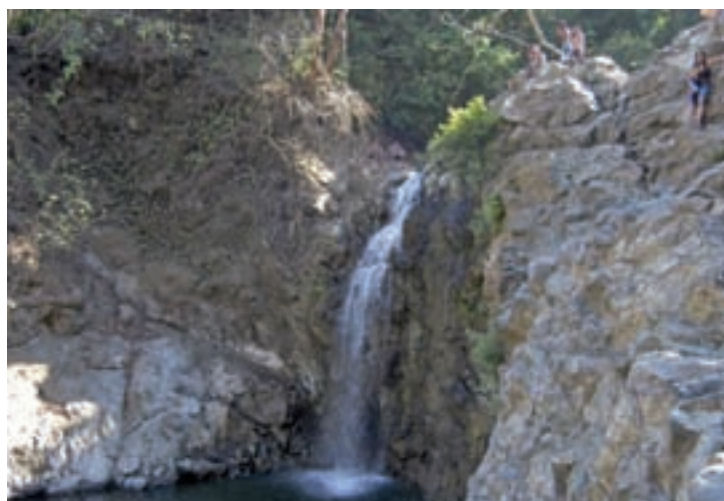
Day 12 Morning Private Guided Tour to Arenal Hanging Bridges - Private transfer to Abangaritos (dinner inc). Overnight: Hacienda La Ensenada, Abangaritos FB

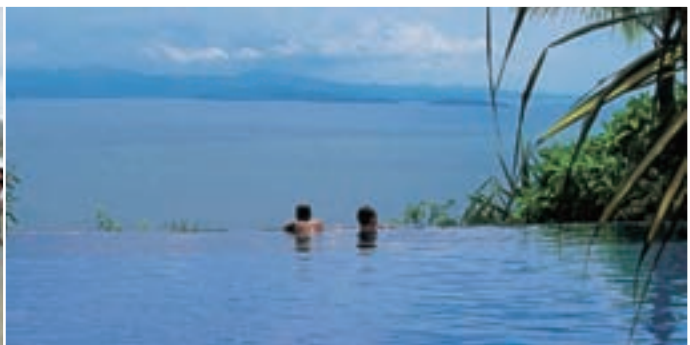
Day 13 Enjoy a half day group boat tour through the Palo Verde National Park. Overnight: Hacienda la Ensenada, Abangaritos

Day 14 Private transfer to San Jose. Overnight: Don Carlos (superior room), San Jose BB

Day 15 (Option to visit Poas Volcano & La Paz Waterfalls on way to the airport for a supplement). Transfer to the airport for flights back to the UK.

*excursion can be upgraded to private tour at a supplement





Suggested Itineraries

Costa Rica in Luxury

14 NIGHTS

Private excursions and transfers throughout

- Near Alajuela 2 nights BB
- Arenal 2 nights BB
- Jaco 2 nights BB
- Manuel Antonio 3 nights BB
- Osa Peninsula 4 nights FB
- Heredia 1 night BB

Day 1 Upon arrival into San Jose, private transfer to the hotel. Overnight: Xandari Plantation, Alajuela (prima plus villa) BB

Day 2 Privately guided tour to Poas Volcano and La Paz Waterfalls (lunch inc). Overnight: Xandari Plantation, Alajuela (prima plus villa)

Day 3 Private transfer to Arenal. Overnight: Arenal Kioro, Arenal (Volcano view suite with jacuzzi) BB

Day 4 Morning private guided tour of the Arenal Hanging Bridges. Overnight: Arenal Kioro, Arenal (Volcano View Suite with Jacuzzi)

Day 5 Private transfer to Jaco. Overnight: Villa Caletas (junior suite) BB

Day 6 Morning private guided tour to Carara National Park. Overnight: Villa Caletas (junior suite)

Day 7 Private transfer to Manuel Antonio.

Overnight: El Parador Hotel, Manuel Antonio (suite with Jacuzzi) BB

Day 8 Private guided Manuel Antonio National Park tour. Overnight: El Parador Hotel, Manuel Antonio (suite with Jacuzzi)

Day 9 Day at leisure. Overnight: El Parador Hotel, Manuel Antonio (suite with Jacuzzi)

Day 10 Private transfer to Quepos Airport for flight to Puerto Jimenez. Continue by 4x4 transfer to the lodge. Overnight: Bosque del Cabo, Osa Peninsula (deluxe cabin with ocean view) FB

Day 11 Day at leisure. Overnight: Bosque del Cabo, Osa Peninsula (deluxe cabin with ocean view)

Day 12 Day at leisure. Overnight: Bosque del Cabo, Osa Peninsula (deluxe cabin with ocean view)

Day 13 Day at leisure. Overnight: Bosque del Cabo, Osa Peninsula (deluxe cabin with ocean view)

Day 14 4x4 transfer to Puerto Jimenez airport for flight back to San Jose. Upon arrival, private transfer to Heredia.

Overnight: Finca Rosa Blanca, Heredia (junior suite) BB

Day 15 Private transfer to the airport for flights back to the UK.



Honeymoon Itinerary with a Difference

14 NIGHTS

Private excursions and transfers throughout

- Near Alajuela 2 nights BB
- Pacuare 2 nights FB
- Arenal 2 nights BB
- Corcovado 3 nights FB
- Nicoya 4 nights BB
- Santa Barbara 1 night BB

Day 1 Met at the airport. Private transfer to the hotel. Xandari Plantation, Alajuela (prima plus villa) BB

Day 2 Privately guided tour to Poas Volcano and La Paz Waterfalls (lunch inc). Overnight: Xandari Plantation, Alajuela (prima plus villa)

Day 3 Group transfer to the Pacuare River (stopping for breakfast en route) Raft along the Pacuare River (grade II-III rapids) until you reach the lodge. Overnight: Pacuare Lodge, (river view cabin) FB

Day 4 Day at leisure. Activities can be arranged locally. Pacuare Lodge (river view cabin)

Day 5 Depart the lodge by raft (grade III-IV rapids). Greeted upon arrival at Siquirres. Private transfer to Arenal. Overnight: Lost Iguana, Arenal (Luxury Suite w/Jacuzzi) BB

Day 6 Afternoon private guided tour to Volcano and hot springs (dinner inc). Overnight: Lost Iguana, Arenal (Luxury Suite w/Jacuzzi) BB

Day 7 Private transfer to the airport for flight to Puerto Jimenez. Greeted upon arrival and a private transfer to Corcovado to reach this beautifully located, remote jungle lodge. Overnight: Luna Lodge, Osa Peninsula (private Bungalow) FB

Day 8 Day at leisure to relax and explore the area. Overnight: Luna Lodge, Osa Peninsula (private bungalow)

Day 9 Day at leisure to relax and explore the area. Luna Lodge, Osa Peninsula (private bungalow)

Day 10 Transfer to Puerto Jimenez Airport for flight to San Jose. Upon arrival, private transfer to the Playa Quisales in Nicoya Peninsula via Ferry. Overnight: Tangomar Resort, Playa Quisales. (Tikki Suite Ocean view) BB

Day 11 Day at leisure. Overnight: Tangomar Resort, Playa Quisales (Tikki Suite Ocean view)

Day 12 Day at leisure. Overnight: Tangomar Resort, Playa Quisales (Tikki Suite Ocean view)

Day 13 Day at leisure. Overnight: Tangomar Resort, Playa Quisales (Tikki Suite Ocean view)

Day 14 Transfer to airstrip. Fly to San Jose – Private transfer to Hotel. Overnight: Finca Rosa Blanca, Santa Barbara de Heredia (junior suite) BB

Day 15 Private transfer to the airport for flights to the UK



Fly Drive 1 – Wildlife & Beaches

14 NIGHTS

Private transfers and self-drive.

- San Jose 2 nights (total) BB
- Arenal 2 nights BB
- Monteverde 2 nights BB
- Nosara 3 nights BB
- Abangaritos 2 nights FB
- Esterillos 3 nights BB

Day 1 Greeted at airport. Private transfer to San Jose. Overnight Grano de Oro, San Jose, (superior room) BB

Day 2 Vehicle delivered. Self drive to Arenal. Overnight Lost Iguana, Arenal BB

Day 3 Day at leisure. Overnight Lost Iguana, Arenal

Day 4 Self drive to Monteverde. Overnight Fonda Vela Lodge (junior suite) BB

Day 5 Day at leisure. Overnight Fonda Vela Lodge (junior suite)

Day 6 Self drive to Nosara in the Nicoya Peninsula to Lagarta Lodge BB

Day 7 Day at leisure. Overnight Lagarta Lodge, Nosara

Day 8 Day at leisure. Overnight Lagarta Lodge, Nosara BB

Day 9 Self drive Abangaritos. Overnight Hacienda La Ensenada, Abangaritos FB

Day 10 Day at leisure. Overnight Hacienda La Ensenada, Abangaritos

Day 11 Self drive to Esterillos. Overnight Xandari by the Pacific, Playa Esterillos Este (Beachfront prima villa) BB

Day 12 Day at leisure. Overnight Xandari by the Pacific, Playa Esterillos Este (Beachfront prima villa)

Day 13 Overnight Xandari by the Pacific, Playa Esterillos Este (Beachfront prima villa)

Day 14 Self drive to San Jose. Return car at hotel at agreed time in the evening.

Overnight Grano de Oro, San Jose, (superior room) BB

Day 15 private transfer to the airport for flights back to the UK



Fly Drive 2 – Flora and Fauna

14 NIGHTS

Private transfers and self-drive. Upgrades available at some hotels for supplement.

- San Jose 2 nights (total) BB
- Sarapiquí 2 nights BB
- Cano Negro 2 nights FB
- Arenal 2 nights BB
- Manuel Antonio 3 nights BB
- Corcovado 3 nights FB

Day 1 Met at the airport. Private transfer to the hotel. Don Carlos (superior room), San Jose. BB

Day 2 Collect vehicle. Self drive to Sarapiquí. Overnight: La Quinta Country Inn, Sarapiquí BB

Day 3 Day at leisure. Overnight: La Quinta Country Inn, Sarapiquí

Day 4 Self drive to Caño Negro. Overnight: Caño Negro Lodge, Caño Negro FB

Day 5 Day at leisure. Overnight: Caño Negro Lodge, Caño Negro

Day 6 Self drive to Arenal. Overnight: Lost Iguana, Arenal BB

Day 7 Day at leisure. Overnight: Lost Iguana, Arenal

Day 8 Self drive to Manuel Antonio. Overnight: Arenas del Mar, Manuel Antonio (superior ocean breeze room) BB

Day 9 Day at leisure. Overnight: Arenas del Mar, Manuel Antonio (superior ocean breeze room)

Day 10 Day at leisure. Overnight: Arenas del Mar, Manuel Antonio (superior ocean breeze room). Drop off car in the evening at hotel.

Day 11 Local transfer to airstrip. Fly to Palmar Sur. Greeted upon arrival and join a group guided transfer to Corcovado including river/ocean crossing to reach this beautifully located, remote jungle lodge. Overnight: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge, Osa Peninsula FB

Day 12 Group guided hike in the Corcovado National Park. Overnight: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge, Osa Peninsula

Day 13 Group guided excursion to Cano Island for snorkelling and picnic lunch. Overnight: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge, Osa Peninsula

Day 14 Transfer to Palmar Sur Airport for flight to San Jose. Upon arrival, private transfer to Hotel. Overnight: Xandari Plantation (prima plus villa), San Jose BB

Day 15 Transfer to the airport for flights back to the UK.



Flight Details

We offer a choice of three services to Costa Rica - Iberia are the only carrier to offer a direct service from Europe. Some of the airlines offer departures from regional airports at no or a small extra cost. As an independent operator, we are not tied to any particular carrier and we are more than happy to give our honest opinion (from personal experience) of their respective services. We always endeavour to offer the carrier offering the best value for money at any given time of year.

Prices in the price panel are based on economy scheduled flights with British Airways/American Airlines flights departing Monday - Thursday. Supplements apply for Friday - Sunday departures. Supplements for other airlines are available on request as are supplements for business class although these are generally very high to South America.



With American Airlines between Miami and San Jose

Daily	Daily
D Heathrow 09.40	D San Jose 12.05
A Miami 13.45	A Miami 16.55
D Miami 18.15	D Miami 20.45
A San Jose 19.10	A Heathrow 10.05*

*following day
Economy seat pitch
Heathrow-Miami: 31 inches

D - Departure time
A - Arrival time



Daily	Daily
D Heathrow 06.20	D San Jose 19.30
A Madrid 09.40	A Madrid 12.45*
D Madrid 12.05	D Madrid 16.30
A San Jose 16.15	A Heathrow 17.50

*following day
Economy seat pitch
Madrid-San Jose: 32 inches



Daily	Daily
D Heathrow 10.30	D San Jose 08.00
A Newark 13.20	A Newark 15.17
D Newark 16.55	D Newark 18.50
A San Jose 20.19	A Heathrow 06.55*

*following day
Economy seat pitch
Heathrow-Newark: 31 inches
• Routing via Houston also available

The above details were correct at the time of going to press. However, all timings and routings are subject to change and will be confirmed at the time of booking. UK airport departure tax has been included in all prices. Departure Tax currently US\$26 per person is (subject to change) payable at San Jose airport prior to check-in for your return flight. Please note the tax has to be paid in cash.

Prices for suggested itineraries

Holiday prices are in £'s per person for duration stated based on two persons sharing a twin/double room. PLEASE NOTE AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS FINALISED AIRLINE AND GROUND PRICES WERE NOT AVAILABLE. THEREFORE, THE PRICES BELOW ARE A GUIDELINE ONLY. PLEASE CONTACT US FOR AN EXACT QUOTE. DURING EASTER AND CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR PERIODS SPECIAL SEASONAL RATES AND MINIMUM NUMBER OF NIGHTS MAY APPLY.

Departure Date guideline determines price. See pages 75-77 for suggested itineraries. For itineraries combining Costa Rica with other countries please see pages 22-29.

Departure Dates
01/01/11 - 31/03/11
13/04/11 - 30/04/11
01/11/11 - 16/12/11
25/12/11 - 31/12/11

Departure Dates
01/04/11 - 12/04/11
01/05/11 - 30/06/11
17/12/11 - 24/12/11

Departure Dates
01/07/11 - 10/07/11
22/08/11 - 31/10/11

Departure Dates
11/07/11 - 21/08/11

ITINERARY	Number of Nights	Guideline price	Guideline price	Guideline price	Guideline price
Highlights of Costa Rica Alajuela, Tortuguero, Arenal, Monteverde, Manuel Antonio, San Jose	14 nights	£3,098	£3,041	£3,386	£3,445
Wildlife Itinerary San Jose, San Gerardo de Dota, Sarapiquí, Abangaritos, Arenal	14 nights	£3,339	£3,296	£3,628	£3,721
Costa Rica in Luxury Alajuela, Arenal, Jaco, Manuel Antonio Osa Peninsula, Heredia	14 nights	£4,119	£3,893	£4,298	£4,385
Honeymoon Itinerary Alajuela, Pacuare, Arenal, Nicoya Peninsula Osa Peninsula, Heredia	14 nights	£3,928	£3,726	£3,995	£4,098
Fly Drive 1 Wildlife and Beaches San Jose, Arenal, Monteverde, Nosara Abangaritos, Esterillos	14 nights	£2,574	£2,529	£2,838	£2,910
Fly Drive 2 Flora and Fauna San Jose, Sarapiquí, Cano Negro, Arenal Manuel Antonio, Osa Peninsula, Alajuela	14 nights	£3,259	£3,149	£3,428	£3,511

Price includes

- Economy scheduled flights from London Heathrow with British Airways (via Miami) including UK airport departure tax and fuel surcharges
- Accommodation, internal flights, transfers, excursions and meals as outlined in the various itineraries

Not included

- Personal Travel Insurance (see page 246)
- Airport taxes for internal flights
- Park entrance fees (where not specified on the itinerary)
- Supplement for other airlines and airports
- Tips

Notes

Single supplements are available on request

Important Note

Payment by credit or charge card will incur a 2% processing charge. This charge may rise if the credit card companies increase their charges.



Costa Rica - A Few Guidelines

Currency

The unit of currency is the COLON. At the time of writing there were approximately 791.00 Colones to £1. The annual rate of inflation is in the region of 11.89%.

Visas & Passports

Travellers with British Passports do not need visas for Costa Rica, but please ensure that your passport has at least six months to run. A machine-readable passport will be required in order to travel visa free. A machine readable passport can generally be identified by the presence of two typeface lines and numbers (with chevrons >>>) printed at the bottom of the page displaying your photo and personal details.

Language

Spanish is the spoken language. Broken English is spoken by many and communication usually is not a problem.

Food & Drink

Local dishes are tasty and wholesome. There are many Italian, French, Mexican and Peruvian restaurants in the main towns. The food is good and \$18 buys a very good meal in local restaurants (not hotels). The staple of rice and black beans (gallo pinto) - forms the backbone of local cuisine. Bocas - snacks such as ceviche (marinated and spiced seafood) and thirst-inducing deep-fried chicharrones (pork rinds) are usually served in bars. Costa Ricans are beer drinkers, and local, lager-style brews (Imperial and Bavaria) are readily available. Wine is not popular, and imported wines, generally found in upmarket restaurants tends to be very expensive. Costa Ricans rise early and go to bed early. Dinner in many places is served only between 6.30pm and 9.00pm.

Vaccinations & Health

You should always check with your doctor/practise nurse as to the latest requirements no later than four weeks before departure. However, the standard Typhoid, Tetanus, Polio and Hepatitis 'A' vaccinations are advisable, as well as a course of anti-malaria tablets (jungle areas). Reduce mosquito bites by the use of a safe skin repellent. We also recommend regular use of a waterproof sun block to protect your skin against the strong tropical sun. The heat and humidity of the tropics make you sweat profusely and can also make you feel lethargic - to

avoid cramps and heat exhaustion it is important to maintain a high fluid intake and ensure that your food is well salted. Please ensure that you use bottled water (check seal not broken) rather than using tap water.

Driving

The roads are generally asphalted, with many potholes and with relatively few miles of motorway. In remoter areas like Rincon De La Vieja and Monteverde roads are unmade and bumpy. Going is slow and lorries plentiful. Driving (on the right) is very much part of the holiday, as the landscape is striking and varied. There is relatively little traffic once outside San Jose.

Hotel Gradings

There is no official class or star structure for accommodation. Our accommodation is generally of three to four star European standard, but some lodges, being in the middle of the jungle are very simple. All rooms have private facilities, but in the simpler lodges, the wash basins (not the showers) are with cold water only. Almost all hotels and lodges, however primitive, are equipped with large ceiling fans. Breakfasts are generally buffet style, with cheese, hams and exotic fruits. All hotels make abundant use of the beautiful and rare woods available in Costa Rica for their furnishings.

Weather / When to Go

Costa Rica lies at a latitude of between 8 and 12 degrees north of the Equator, which makes for little year round temperature change (rain or no rain) and a consistent day length. The sun rises at about 5.00am and sets by 6.30pm. It is the altitude and location changes which determine the temperature. The highlands are generally between 50F and 55F, while the central plateau, where San Jose the capital is situated at around 3,800feet, is around 65F. The Pacific and Atlantic (Caribbean) coastal regions are warmer at 80F plus and, at the end of the dry season, March and April (especially on the Pacific side) closer to 90F. The rainy season, or "Green" season as it is called locally, (though it is hard to imagine that it can get any greener), lasts from May to November. The climate during these months is predictable, with sunny weather in the morning and short-lived tropical downpours in the afternoon. During these months there are fewer people, prices are lower and you will see Costa Rica at its

most refreshed and beautiful. The Caribbean coast and Osa Peninsula, with its tropical rainforests, is much wetter, with 150 to 300 inches of rain per annum depending on the location, while the central valley averages 100 inches.

Time

Costa Rica is either 6 or 7 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) depending on the time of year.

Car Hire

In order to be independent, maximise your experience of the country, and enable you to "get off the beaten track", we have included a manual Suzuki Grand Vitara with air-conditioning (suitable for up to three adults plus luggage) in all our fly-drive itineraries. For four adults plus luggage, we recommend the Toyota 4 Runner (at a supplement). Please note that this car does not have a parcel shelf. Quote for automatic cars upon request.

We use Alamo as our car hire supplier in Costa Rica. They have offices in many different locations within the country. Therefore, vehicles can be collected in one location and dropped off at another (drop off fees are included in the price). Unlimited mileage, roadside breakdown recovery, local taxes and full CDW insurance is included. This only covers drivers when operating the car under 'normal' circumstances ie. not under the influence of alcohol or drugs or where the car has been damaged due to reckless driving. Third-party damages are also included whether it is the driver's fault or not. If the radio or the actual vehicle is stolen, this is also covered. There is no excess to be paid. However, tyres and windows are NOT covered by the insurance. Personal belongings are also not covered. Minimum age for driving is 21. There is no maximum. A UK driving licence, passport and credit card are required when collecting the vehicle (will swipe the card for security purposes). The general policy (unless advised otherwise) is to receive the car with a full tank of petrol and to therefore return it full on drop-off - if you forget, your credit card will be charged automatically (and Alamo charge more than the petrol stations). The vehicle must be returned to the office/hotel on time otherwise extra charges will apply (payable locally). There is no charge for a second driver and both names are entered on the contract for

insurance purposes. Any fines issued by the Police will be charged to your Alamo account and should be paid when returning the car. Under no circumstances should any money be paid to any Police officers.

Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA)

The USA government has enforced changes to its visa-waiver programme meaning travellers (including transit passengers) will be required to apply for authorisation to travel under the scheme before arriving at the airport. The changes, which came into effect in January 2009 will affect all passport holders from the 34 countries currently participating in the visa-waiver scheme, including UK passport holders. Further details will be supplied at the time of booking.

Approximate driving times

Abangaritos - Playa Quisales 4.5hrs (inc. ferry crossing)
Arenal - Abangaritos 4 hrs
Arenal - Caño Negro 2.5 hrs
Arenal - Carara National Park 4 hrs
Arenal - Manuel Antonio 5.5 hrs
Arenal - Monteverde 4.5 hrs
Arenal - Playa Bejuco 5.5 hrs
Arenal - Playa Quisales. 5.5 hrs (inc. ferry crossing)
Arenal - Rincon 4.5 hrs
Arenal - Sarapiquí 2.5 hrs
Ballena - Bosque del Cabo 3.5 hrs
Manuel Antonio - Ballena 3 hrs
Manuel Antonio - Esterillos 1 hrs
Manuel Antonio - Playa Quisales 5.5hrs (inc. ferry crossing)
Manuel Antonio - San Gerardo 4 hrs
Monteverde - Abangaritos 3.5 hrs
Monteverde - Manuel Antonio 5.5 hrs
Monteverde - Nosara 5.5 hrs
San Gerardo - Ballena 3 hrs
San Gerardo - Bosque del Cabo 5.5 hrs
San Gerardo - Turrialba 3.5 hrs
San Jose - Arenal 3.5 hrs
San Jose - Carara National Park 2.5 hrs
San Jose - Manuel Antonio 4 hrs
San Jose - Monteverde 4.5 hrs
San Jose - Playa Quisales 5 hrs (inc. ferry crossing)
San Jose - San Gerardo 2.5 hrs
San Jose - Sarapiquí 2.5 hrs
San Jose-Turrialba 2.5 hrs
Sarapiquí-Caño Negro 2.5 hrs
Sarapiquí-Guapiles 50 min
Sarapiquí-San Gerardo 5 hrs