

# Costa Rica Visitors Guide

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## **Foreword**

Costa Rica is a wonderful place to visit with your family, friends, or even alone. Many couples honeymoon in Costa Rica combining romance, adventure and mystical visits to volcanoes, rainforest's, waterfalls, and secluded beaches. Our goal is to provide a condensed guide that you can print and take with you to use for reference. For more detailed information about Costa Rica our [website](#) is the best information source on the web.

## **Country Information**

Costa Rica is in Central America north of Panama and south of Nicaragua. The Pacific Ocean borders the country to the west and the Caribbean to the east.

The citizens of Costa Rica are affectionately called Tico's and Tica's. In all of Latin America, the Tico's are most like North American's in their thought process. There are many cultural differences but tourism and tourists in general are welcomed warmly in this country.

Costa Rica has the highest literacy rate in Latin America. Every four years elections are held with 95% of the population participating in the voting process. Costa Rica has had no military forces since 1946. 27% of the country's budget is spent on health care. Although there are demonstrations occasionally, civil unrest is not present. Costa Rica is considered to be the "Latin American success story".

The country has 110 volcanic craters, six active volcanoes, mountain ranges throughout the central portion of the country, and secluded beaches with rain forest teaming with wildlife butting right up to the shoreline.

Temperature varies with elevation. Humidity is present and noticeable, especially at sea level. Mosquitoes are obviously part of any rain forest but are not as noticeable as most parts of Florida, for instance, due to Costa Rica's natural predators maintaining an ecological balance. (Bring repellent with Deet however!)

Costa Rica has a wet and dry season. The wet or "green" season is from May until November each year. During this time rainfall is more prevalent in most regions (Guanacaste province is the driest area in the country) with sunshine typical in the morning hours and showers in the afternoon and at night. Green season is when hotels offer discounts and crowds are minimized. As mentioned earlier, the northwestern portion of Costa Rica is the best "green" season destination due to rainfall considerations.

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## **General Information**

**Entry requirements** for visitors differ depending on your country of origin. US citizens, Canadians, and United Kingdom tourists need a valid passport but do not require a visa. The maximum stay under these conditions is 90 days but can be extended an additional 90 days through a travel agent or within the country through immigration.

**Vaccinations** are not required for malaria and other diseases to visit Costa Rica.

The **water** in most areas is safe to drink. Some coastal areas are exceptions however. Bottled water is recommended simply due to taste considerations. If you are at the Multiplaza mall in Escazu for instance the water is perfectly fine to drink. Smaller communities on the coast can be problematic however.

Costa Rica has the best fruit in the world in my opinion. Eat anything you like!

**Driving** in Costa Rica is an adventure! A stop sign in Costa Rica is treated like a yield sign in North America. Potholes in certain areas are HUGE. If renting a car consider the following:

- Do not leave valuables in the car
- Rental agencies look for any trace of dents and dings
- Roads are narrow and guard rails are usually not present
- Did I mention POTHLES

**Electricity** is standard 110v like in the USA but generally not grounded. This means that any device requiring a three prong plug will not work without an adapter to two prongs. So, bring an adapter for anything requiring three prongs.

English is widely spoken in tourist areas and major metropolitan areas. Driving a rental car all over the country with no knowledge of Spanish might be problematic. It is generally easy to find someone to help you in English in tourist areas and big cities however.

**Medical facilities** are available throughout the country. Remote areas, however, only have clinics for minor issues and often have few English speaking staff members. San Jose has excellent medical facilities and English speaking doctors are quite common. Ask the proprietor of the hotel you choose about medical facilities in the area if you have health concerns.

**Emergency service** in Costa Rica is available by dialing 911.

**Holidays** are taken seriously here. Visit around Easter or Christmas and it will seem that the entire country is shut down. The Easter and Christmas holiday's last 1 week!

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## **Traveler Safety**

Violent crime exists in every society. Costa Rica is a safe place to bring your family or to travel alone. Most crime is property theft and pick-pocket oriented theft.

- Make sure that you leave your Rolex at home.
- Do not keep your wallet in your back pocket. Keep it in your front pocket.
- Do not place valuables in backpacks slung over your shoulder.
- Many places are perfectly safe to walk at night. Others are not. Ask at the hotel.

Beaches have **rip tides**.

A riptide is narrow. If caught in a riptide swim parallel to the shore for a short distance until you no longer feel it pulling you away from shore. Salt water is easy to float in. Don't freak out!

**Sharks** are prevalent in certain areas of both the Pacific and Caribbean.

Sharks are of concern for fishermen and surfers primarily. If you are not a pro ask about the area you plan to visit. Some of the island's around Costa Rica have huge populations of sharks.

Costa Rica is just north of the Equator. Use **sunscreen** liberally and drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids while in the elements. I know, now I sound like your mother!

**Taxi's** have meters. Many unofficial taxi's ply their services in the country. Prior to any trip anywhere, agree on the price before you get in the taxi unless they are using the meter. Many taxi's **do not** use their meters.

Most hotels, resorts, and bed and breakfast's provide transportation from the airport and are valuable resources to identify the fair cost from one place to another when using taxi services.

## **Beaches**

Beaches in Costa Rica are not all the same. Some beaches are great for surfing and poor choices for children. Many beaches include amenities close by and plenty of tanned bodies to admire. Others offer secluded splendor and less amenities. Careful planning is necessary to find the right area for a successful vacation here.

The beach options are too numerous to even mention here. Please consider looking at our [beaches](#) page for information about some of the best beaches. For [surfing](#) we have a surfing page highlighting the best spots to catch a wave.

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## Volcanoes

Some parts of Costa Rica look more like the moon than Central America!

**Arenal** is an active volcano that offers excellent potential to experience all the elements of an active volcano. The Tabacon hot springs is a beautiful area offering relaxation, romance, and wonderful atmosphere. Arenal is located about 3 ½ hours north of San Jose.

**Poas** volcano is close to San Jose in the Central Valley and provides eerie views of one of the world's largest volcanic lakes in its crater. Poas is easy to hike compared to other places but has no facility for food and drinks in the park area. Bring your own!

**Rincon de la Vieja** is in northwestern Costa Rica (Guanacaste province) and is actually a compound volcano meaning that there are more than one composite volcanoes aligned on a ridge. Rincon has 9 eruptive craters, includes bubbling mud pits, and volcanic geysers. Hikes to the summit are controlled by park rangers to keep people from getting lost. Obviously this is more challenging hiking compared to Poas!

## **Rain Forests**

Rain forests and animals of the rain forest are one of the big attractions of Costa Rica. Bird watching, flora and fauna, monkey's, sloths, and many other creatures abound in the rain forests of Costa Rica. Each region has slightly different plant life and animals populating the forests. The lodge and hotel accommodations range from primitive to exotic. Take your time and choose an area that combines activities that you and your family have interests in.

**Manuel Antonio** is one of the most popular parks in Costa Rica. The park is located in the Central Pacific area and provides great accommodations, rain forest, waterfalls, and beach vacations.

**Monteverde Cloud Forest** is a wonderland of nature. Located near the Arenal volcano about 3 1/2 hours from San Jose this misty forest is a great place to see birds, monkey's and other wildlife in a well tended easily hiked park.

**Corcovado National Park** is lowland rain forest and is home to a large population of scarlet macaws. The park features well designed trails, camping, and plenty of ranger stations. The hiking is strenuous, pack your own food and get back to nature in the southern Pacific portion of Costa Rica.

**Cahuita National Park** provides flat easily hiked trails, and plenty of wildlife in thick lowland forest. White face and howler monkey's are your companions here. Generally rustic accommodations and less amenities are characteristic on the Caribbean coastal areas.

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**Final Thoughts**

Fun Costa Rica Vacations hopes this visitors guide has been helpful to you. Our goal is to provide useful information to travelers and specifically first time visitors to Costa Rica.

For this reason, if you did not find the answer to a pressing question you have about Costa Rica please [contact us](#) at our website about it. We want to provide the most accurate up to date information available to visitors to ensure a fun vacation for all!

Best Regards,

Staff at fun-costa-rica-vacations.com