

COSTA RICA

# Southern Rainforest & Coast

A Guided Walking Adventure





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## Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

And, with our **new optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **Arenal Post-Tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.



## Overview

Vivid and exotic beauty is the backdrop to this walking adventure in Costa Rica. Tropical rainforests, rushing rivers, and volcanic mountains contribute to its dizzying array of biodiversity. On this eight-day adventure you sample this diversity by spending the first days in the heart of the Talamanca Mountain Range, high in the cooling cloudforest of Los Quetzales National Park. This UNESCO World Heritage site presents long walks amid rare forest and plants, ancient oaks and lush wild avocados, and protected habitat for species migrating from North and South America. This biological hotspot also attracts researchers from around the world.

Traveling southwest to the Pacific Coast area of Costa Rica brings you to a stunning location perched between rainforest and Pacific beaches, where walks lead to protected preserves and local farming communities. Your final destination is a remote peninsula, where you can stroll sandy beaches, explore pristine rainforest, and snorkel with colorful tropical fish. Corcovado National Park is the last significant expanse of virgin rainforest in Central America, with trees towering 150 feet into a misty sky. Over 350 recorded species of birds, dazzling butterflies, and a variety of fauna, ranging from howler monkeys to jaguars and tapirs, combine to create a nature lover's paradise. Walks take you deep into the forest of Corcovado, while a boat brings you offshore to pristine Caño Island Biological Reserve, to snorkel in the warm and clear coastal waters of its reef. Famous Costa Rican hospitality is extended throughout, but especially

in three outstanding hotels that are flawlessly paired with their surroundings—a traditional mountain lodge, where the founding family has welcomed guests for over 50 years; a hotel set in luxuriant gardens overlooking Pacific sunset views; and, finally, an award-winning jungle lodge that has achieved the perfect balance between luxury and low environmental impact. From the first sip of enticing Costa Rican coffee, to a refreshing cocktail watching the setting sun, to grilled freshly caught fish, your walks and adventures are enhanced by the bounty and diversity of Costa Rica.

# Daily Itinerary

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## DAY 1

Los Quetzales National Park; 3-4 miles, moderate (elevation of walk is 8,200 feet)

The tour begins this morning by heading south from San José on the Pan-American Highway soon arriving at Los Quetzales National Park and La Amistad National Park, which straddle the border of Costa Rica and Panama. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983 for its unique character and geography, the Talamanca Range is the third-most-diverse biological hotspot in the world, providing a habitat for the interbreeding of both North American and South American species of flora and fauna. As you wind your way along the road, climbing Cerro de la Muerte (part of the Talamanca Mountain Range) from the north, you follow the Continental Divide, with alternating vistas from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts.

This two-hour drive takes you into the heart of rural Costa Rica, unchanged since the road was built in the 1950s. Turning off onto a side road, you arrive at the home of Eladio and Maria Salazar. A park volunteer, born and raised in this high montane cloudforest, Eladio accompanies you on the day's walk. But first, he and his wife welcome you into their home for delicious *tico* (Costa Rican) coffee and a small snack. Afterward, you set off with Eladio into Los Quetzales National Park. Extending over 12,000 acres, this national park is Costa Rica's newest and protects significant portions of the Savegre River watershed, which you follow from the mountains to the coast on this tour. Los Quetzales is aptly named for the stunning resplendent quetzal, frequently sighted in the park. In the heart of the Talamanca Mountain Range, with the highest peak at an elevation of 11,000 feet, the park comprises tropical oak cloudforest and subalpine vegetation. The plants here are similar to those in temperate zones.

You walk in the Quetzales Paradise Farm, owned by the Serrano family and also part of the Quetzales National Park—one of the few sites awarded the Costa Rican Government's Blue Flag for its conservation efforts in watershed protection. You traverse a forest of tall oaks, centenary mountain cypress, and magnolias, among many other trees, their branches and trunks festooned with hundreds of epiphytes. This magical landscape is bathed in mist that covers the canopy almost year-round, creating the unique cloudforest habitat, with famous resident birds such as the elusive resplendent quetzal, the beautiful but noisy



emerald toucanet, and the elegant violet sabrewing. Animals in the area include two-toed sloths, spider monkeys, mountain rabbits, kinkajous, coatis, spiny green lizards, and gray foxes. It is important to note that this first walk of the week takes place at an elevation of 8,200 feet and weather can be variable—please be prepared with layers.

Later, you arrive at the family-owned lodge that is your home for two nights, and whose founders were the first pioneers to arrive and establish a farm in this scenic valley in 1954. In addition to welcoming guests to their lodge and extensive grounds, they also grow apples, plums, and peaches, all served at the lodge's restaurant. The proud recipient of "four leaves" (out of five) from the Costa Rica Tourism Institute and their Certification in Sustainable Tourism Program, their hard work and efforts are evident, and by staying here you support their good work. The best part—you are welcomed in absolute quality and comfort in your lodging and dining!

If time allows, you may have the options to go horseback riding or revitalize with a spa treatment at the new facility along the Savegre River (at your own expense). You gather for dinner this evening at the lodge's Las Bromelias Restaurant, where you may try freshly caught trout from the river, cooked to perfection.

### **Savegre Hotel, Natural Reserve & Spa, San Gerardo de Dota**

Situated in a private reserve at over 7,000 feet in the midst of a cloudforest valley, this mountain hotel provides comfortable and spacious rooms surrounded by lush gardens, walking trails, and an excellent restaurant and facilities, adhering to high standards of environmental sustainability.

## DAY 2

Los Robles and Cascada trails, 6 miles, moderate with challenging sections; elevation gain and descent of 1,000 feet



Today you explore the unique ecosystem surrounding your lodge with more than 30 miles of trails leading into the hotel's private cloudforest reserve. Located in the environs of the Cerro de la Muerte in the Talamanca Range, 75 percent of its 1,000-acre property is protected. At an elevation between 7,220 and 8,500 feet, 80 percent of the reserve is virgin forest, with the newer growth of the remainder reforested with native species, in particular wild avocado. Known worldwide for its diversity of plant life, including ancient oaks, orchids, and bromeliads, the reserve is a living research laboratory for institutions such as the Institute of Systematic Botany (New York) and the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago), both of which study mushrooms endemic to the area. Two German universities, in conjunction with the University of Costa Rica and the Costa Rican National Institute of Biodiversity, conduct research on the hydrological significance of the epiphytes in the region. The reserve's animal life includes more than 170 species of birds, as well as numerous mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and insects.

The walking route explores the higher part of the lodge's property—a pristine primary oak forest. The undulating trail, with short but steep ascents and descents, has several small stream crossings, and in places can be muddy with some roots and rocks. Here in one of Costa Rica's most beautiful and unique forests, you may spot an astounding variety of birds. Species range from those known in North America such as the red-tailed hawk and hairy woodpecker to those of Central America such as the resplendent quetzal, sulphur-winged parakeet, black guan, collared trogon, and flame-colored and spangled-cheeked tanagers, to name only a few. Tonight you enjoy an exceptional in-home experience. You are welcomed to the home of the Chacon family for a dinner of watercress soup, fresh trout, and plenty of lively conversation.

**Savegre Hotel, Natural Reserve & Spa, San Gerardo de Dota**

### DAY 3

Siberia de Pérez Zeledón, 3½ miles, moderate (elevation of walk 9,840 feet).  
Transfer to Dominical and Playa Uvita, 3 hours

For early risers, a short optional bird-watching walk around the gardens of the lodge is a tranquil start to the day. After an ample buffet breakfast, you depart for the 3-hour drive to the Pacific Coast, which is broken up with stops along the way. The drive follows the Pan American Highway to the small community of Siberia de Pérez Zeledón. This small village of only 100 inhabitants makes a living on blackberries and dairy farming.

Your walk today leads down a traditional ox-cart road through paramo and native oak forest. The destination is the home of Martin Salazar, where you are welcomed to a typical lunch of soup accompanied by rice and beans and finished off with a glass of blackberry wine—and maybe even blackberry pie! Continuing the journey, the road takes you along the foothills of Talamanca, through small Costa Rican villages mainly supported by coffee and dairy farming. The journey ends in the south Pacific region of Playa Ballena, at Uvita and Dominical beach, within walking distance of the Ballena Marine National Park—Latin America’s first and Costa Rica’s only marine national park. In the early evening, you arrive at your hotel, overlooking Costa Rica’s southern Pacific coast. Perched between the beach and rainforest-covered mountains in a private nature reserve of over 600 acres, spectacular sunsets are among the many amenities. After settling into your room, you gather at the open-air restaurant for a fine dinner of local specialties.

#### **Cristal Ballena, Uvita**

Perched high above the beach, this four-star hotel provides stunning views over the Pacific Ocean and is cooled by downslope rainforest breezes. Spacious Mediterranean-style rooms, a large swimming pool with poolside restaurant and bar, and a spa are all contained in 30 acres of beautifully tended tropical gardens. Dedicated to marine and terrestrial conservation and environmental education, this recipient of 4 out of 5 leaves for sustainable tourism offers both sustainability and comfort.



## DAY 4

Campeminos Reserve, 7 miles, moderate; optional walk, guides choice based on local conditions



After awakening to a breakfast spread of homemade breads, pastries, yogurts, and eggs to order, you have the choice of shorter or longer options based on the weather and local conditions. For the longer option, the destination is the Campeminos Reserve, located in a beautiful mountain range between the Naranjo and Savegre rivers' watersheds. A one-hour drive takes you to the town of Santo Domingo, where a short walk joins the Savegre River. A steady ascent brings you to the Campeminos Reserve, which contains more than 80 acres of primary and secondary forest. Some paths in the reserve's extensive network of trails have exposed rocks and roots, while others are smoother and wider. Campeminos is also a cooperative of the local farming community of Quebrada Arroyo and is managed by Don Miguel Mora, his brother Visai, and his wife Doña Juanita, and is a wonderful example of rural tourism, in which both visitors and local farmers benefit. Along this route you may stop for a swim in a refreshing natural pool beneath a waterfall. The walk continues to a suspension bridge over a deep river gorge (crossing the bridge is optional). In the lowlands, birdlife includes toucans, parrots, and tanagers. After lunch, the trail continues along this rural path for 5 miles to the small town of Londres, where your driver is waiting to bring you back to Uvita.

This afternoon there is time to relax or perhaps refresh with a swim before meeting for a sunset drink to toast your quintessential Costa Rican day. Dinner this evening is at your hotel's restaurant.

### **Cristal Ballena, Uvita**



## DAY 5

Transfer to Corcovado National Park; 2-4 miles, easy to moderate, with moderate sections

This morning you depart for the Corcovado National Park, located on the Osa Peninsula, jutting into the Pacific in southwestern Costa Rica. The park contains the last remaining Pacific

lowland rainforest of sustainable size in Central America. Corcovado is the “crown jewel” of Costa Rica’s world-renowned national park system, described by *National Geographic* as “the most biologically intense place on earth.” And your lodge for three nights is an environmentally sensitive oasis, the lodging closest to the park, which can only be reached by boat. You make a stop en route at the newly established Finca 6, the Stones Spheres Park, owned by the National Museum of Costa Rica and managed by local leaders from Plantain Fields Cooperatives. A short walk takes you to these magnificent and mysterious spheres, some placed more than 1,000 years ago by indigenous people. Soon after, you embark on a boat in the Sierpe River for the two-hour ride to one of the world’s most famous neotropical parks. The Sierpe River leads directly to the open waters of the Pacific, and here, where the river meets the ocean, the waters can be turbulent. Once on the ocean, the boat skirts the coastline to Drake Bay, and finally to the private landing of Casa Corcovado on the edge of the Corcovado National Park. Watch for the occasional dolphin or humpback whale; Costa Rican waters are visited by humpbacks from the northern and southern Pacific oceans!

The boat ride is a dramatic approach to the lodge, and because you might get wet getting on and off as the boat pulls up directly onto the beach, we recommend wearing water shoes on this day. The enchanting lodge is tucked on the coast in the primary rainforest of a 170-acre private reserve bordering Corcovado National Park, and provides the ideal base for an in-depth rainforest experience. Following lunch, you settle into individually appointed bungalows.

This afternoon you begin your rainforest exploration on one of the trails through the preserve, through the lush and unique lowland rainforest of Corcovado. Because it is the rainforest, the walking terrain has roots in many

places and can often be muddy. After a welcome drink at the sunset bar and dinner at the lodge's dining room, you fall asleep to the sounds of the rainforest.

### **Casa Corcovado, Osa Peninsula**

Combining luxury and the highest environmental standards, Casa Corcovado offers Spanish colonial-style individual bungalows in a beautifully landscaped jungle setting with two swimming pools, a private beach, fine dining, and an extensive network of walking trails. The jungle lodge has earned Costa Rica's highest recognition for sustainable tourism, the coveted "five leaves," awarded for its commitment to the environment and local communities.



## **DAY 6**

Casa Corcovado — San Pedrillo ranger station; 5-7 miles, easy to moderate

The cry of howler monkeys is the wake-up call in this nature lover's paradise. An optional early-morning bird watch over a cup of delicious Costa Rican coffee may reveal species such as the scarlet macaw, white hawk, short-billed pigeon, and white-tipped sicklebill. After a copious breakfast, you begin a walk through a lush primary rainforest, always on the lookout for the abundant bird and animal life. The park is home to four species of Costa Rican monkeys: howler, spider, white-faced, and squirrel monkeys, which may be perched in the canopy above. The land where Corcovado National Park is situated was once an island that millions of years ago drifted to the mainland. With this unique geography, in addition to hundreds of species of plants and birds, it is also one of the last places for jaguars, tapirs, and white-lipped peccaries in Central America.

From the lodge you descend into the forest, where you may hear more raucous howler monkeys. Later, after crossing a pristine mountain stream, the trail leads through the dense rainforest and past unspoiled waterfalls. Continuing over some more primitive forest trails to one of the few ranger stations in the national park, you break for a picnic lunch before looping back to the lodge. Depending on the ocean tides, on the return much of the walk can follow along the beach, an opportunity to observe several species of marine birds. This evening, you

gather for a feast of local specialties, which may feature the catch of the day prepared in classic Casa Corcovado style.

## **Casa Corcovado, Osa Peninsula**

### **DAY 7**

Caño Island Biological Reserve; snorkeling; optional walk, guide's choice. Free afternoon

After breakfast at the lodge, you board a boat for the half-hour trip to Caño Island, which may be accompanied by playful dolphins swimming alongside. The island's surrounding waters offer some of the finest snorkeling in Costa Rica—within 50 feet of the beach, a wide variety of brilliantly colored tropical fish and coral species make their home in the island's reef. Not only do the waters surrounding Caño Island contain some of the most abundant and varied marine life in the world, but the island also possesses several pre-Columbian archaeological artifacts.

If you do not wish to partake in the full-day trip to Caño Island, options are available to spend the day on a longer walk or to simply enjoy the grounds of the property, the pools, or the spa featuring local treatments (at your own expense). Back at the lodge, you savor your final celebratory evening in the rainforest, accompanied by a beautiful sunset, tropical drinks, and the ever-present howler monkeys in the distance.

## **Casa Corcovado, Osa Peninsula**

### **DAY 8**

Departure from the Osa Peninsula

The departure journey begins with a 30-minute boat ride back to Drake, where a private bus is waiting for the 20-minute drive to the local airstrip, where you board the 45-minute flight to San José. Please note luggage restrictions outlined in the packing list. The flight path follows the Savegre watershed and passes over the mountain range, allowing a unique vantage point to the terrain you have just explored on tour. A waiting van takes you to San José's International Airport to check in 3 hours before your scheduled flight.

## **ITINERARY CHANGES**

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

## **DRIVING NOTE**

Due to the relatively undeveloped road infrastructure in Costa Rica, driving times are particularly long on Day 1, Day 3, and Day 8. The approximate driving time from San José to the Savegre Hotel is 2 hours; from the Savegre Hotel to Dominical/Uvita is 3 hours; and on our last day an internal flight (45 minutes) is required from the Osa Peninsula to San José. Please note luggage restrictions in the packing list. Please understand that the itinerary has been designed to separate the driving days and allow ample time to relax in between and enjoy the exciting walks unique to each of the three distinct regions you visit. Also rest assured that the destinations are well worth the drives! All of the buses are air-conditioned.

## **HIGH-ALTITUDE WARNING**

The highest elevation you will be walking at on this tour is approximately 9,840 feet. The altitude may have some effect on travelers. Typical symptoms include nausea, a loss of appetite, insomnia, shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches, or other minor irregularities. There are actions you can take to help you adjust to the altitude, including drinking lots of water (more than you feel you need) and getting plenty of sleep. Also, take your time while walking, allow your body to adjust, and always keep your guides informed of how you are feeling. Please discuss with your doctor whether taking altitude medication would be helpful.

## RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

We proudly support the **Corcovado Foundation** in Costa Rica. Working closely with the National Park Service, the organization aims to increase the protection of wild areas while also promoting environmental education. Originally created to put a stop to illegal hunting and logging in the Corcovado National Park, the foundation also serves to protect the rights of local communities by using responsible tourism as a tool to help protect Costa Rica's wild resources. We invite you to learn more at [corcovadofoundation.org](http://corcovadofoundation.org).

# Tour Itinerary Overview

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## TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

### Hotel Doubletree Cariari, San José, Costa Rica, 8:00 a.m.

San Antonio de Belen Ciudad Cariari  
San José, Costa Rica  
Tel 011 506 2239-0022

## NIGHTS 1 & 2

### Savegre Hotel, Nature Reserve & Spa

San Gerardo de Dota, Costa Rica  
Tel 011 506 2740 1028  
Fax 011 506 2740 1027  
Email [ventas@savegre.com](mailto:ventas@savegre.com)  
[savegre.com](http://savegre.com)  
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## NIGHTS 3 & 4

### Cristal Ballena Hotel & Spa

Uvita, Costa Rica  
Tel 011 506 2786 5354  
Fax 011 506 2786 5355  
Email [info@cristal-ballena.com](mailto:info@cristal-ballena.com)  
[cristal-ballena.com](http://cristal-ballena.com)  
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## NIGHTS 5, 6, & 7

### Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge

Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica  
Tel 011 506 2256 3181  
Fax 011 506 2256 7409  
Email [corcovado@racsa.co.cr](mailto:corcovado@racsa.co.cr)  
[casacorcovado.com/](http://casacorcovado.com/)  
Laundry service available. Wireless Internet and hair dryers unavailable.

## **TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME**

**Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO), San José, Costa Rica, 11:00 a.m.**

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT**

### **One Call International**

Email [mail@oncallinternational.com](mailto:mail@oncallinternational.com)

### **If communicating from within the US**

Text 603.945.0103

Tel 800.555.9095

### **If calling from outside the US**

Tel 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.



# Tour Facts at a Glance

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## **TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)**

8 days, 7 nights

## **DEPARTURE DATES (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)**

February 14-21, 2016

March 19-26, 2016

November 20-27, 2016

December 11-18, 2016

## **SCHEDULED GROUP PRICE, TOUR ONLY**

February & March: \$4,498 (Single+\$598)

November & December: \$4,598 (Single+\$598)

If you are interested in reserving the optional Flight + Tour Combo and pre- or post-tour extensions **for our scheduled group departures**, please refer to the attached itinerary for tour length, dates, pricing, and inclusions.

## **PRIVATE TOUR-ONLY PRICE FROM**

February & March:

6–9 guests: from \$4,698 (Single+\$598)

10+ guests: from \$4,498 (Single+\$598)

November & December:

6–9 guests: from \$4,598 (Single+\$598)

10+ guests: from \$4,798 (Single+\$598)

This private tour is available daily, on request, from January 1 through August 14 and November 16 through December 31.

## **TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME**

Hotel Doubletree Cariari, San José, Costa Rica, 8:00 a.m.

## **TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME**

Juan Santa Maria International Airport (SJO), San José, Costa Rica, 11:00 a.m.

## ACTIVITY LEVEL

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated moderate, with an average of 2-7 miles per day with daily ascents and descents. Walking in the heat and humidity of the tropics can make the walks more challenging than expected, and the terrain is very diverse and very different than walking on pavement.

Footing is often uneven with loose stones and slippery roots through rainforest, beach, cloudforest, and pastureland. The daily walks are flexible according to the changing weather patterns and seasonal differences of the regions visited. These regional differences lead us from altitudes of up to 9,840 feet and corresponding cool weather to the Pacific lowland rainforest and the heat and humidity that are found there. The itinerary embraces three of Costa Rica's ecosystems—rainforest, cloudforest, and the Pacific Coast—therefore there are two travel days with limited walking. The pace on this tour is leisurely to allow time for optimal wildlife viewing.

## INCLUSIONS

- » One expert generalist guide and regional local guides, with you 24/7
- » All meals; local wine or beer included with dinners
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Mandatory internal airfare of \$150
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

## LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Guest Acknowledgment of Risk and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

## **GRATUITIES**

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency.

# Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **new optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

## TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

**Hotel Doubletree Cariari, San José, Costa Rica, 8:00 a.m.**

If you are not reserving the optional Flight + Tour Combo, please book your flights into San Jose, Costa Rica the day before the tour begins.

Your guide(s) will meet you in the lobby of the Hotel Doubletree Cariari and will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking, including something warm and a raincoat, as it can be chilly and windy on our first walk.

## MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO), San José, Costa Rica

## GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT

**Getting to the Hotel Doubletree Cariari:**

- Taxi time from airport: 10 minutes; taxi fare from airport: \$20.00 (payable in USD). Taxi cabs are readily available at the airport's exit. (Most taxi drivers understand English, but you may find a Spanish phrase book useful.)
- For arrivals on the optional Flight + Tour Combo, a complimentary shuttle is available from 5:00 am to 7:00 pm.

## PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are not reserving the optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the meeting point hotel for the night prior to your tour. To make a reservation, please contact the hotel(s) directly.

**San Jose Airport meeting hotel (8:00 a.m.):**

Hotel Doubletree Cariari  
San Antonio de Belen Ciudad Cariari  
San José, Costa Rica  
Tel 011 506 2239-0022  
Fax 011 506 2239-0285  
doubletree3.hilton.com

A large, modern hotel conveniently located a short distance from the international airport. Room rates start from \$150 USD including taxes.

## **DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS**

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

## **TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME**

**Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO), San José, Costa Rica, 11:00 a.m.**

We cannot guarantee arrival to the Juan Santamaria International Airport prior to 11:00 a.m. Please do not schedule any flights prior to 2:00 p.m. (allowing the requested 3-hour check-in in advance of international flights). If you plan to schedule your return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please contact your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

## **AIRPORT DEPARTURE TAX**

The San José Airport in Costa Rica currently requires a payment of \$29 USD per person (in cash or by Visa), as international departure tax prior to boarding. This can be paid in USD or *colones*.

## **NOTE**

When leaving hotel contact information for family and friends, please inform them that the telephone and internet system in Costa Rica is not as efficient as in the United States. Often lines are busy for hours or you may get through only to be cut off moments later. This situation is not uncommon when traveling in a developing country. Please be aware that if the caller is experiencing difficulties reaching you, the staff at the Country Walkers office will also experience the same problem.

# Information & Policies

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## **GUARANTEED DEPARTURES**

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour\*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

*\*except in cases of force majeure*

## **RESERVATIONS**

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255. We can confirm your reservation with a deposit of \$350 per person. Final tour cost is due 90 days prior to tour departure date. As arrangements are confirmed at least a year in advance, the tour price is subject to change.

## **GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

## **CANCELLATION POLICY**

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost\*. Please notify us in writing.

*\*One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

## **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Air or other travel arrangements to and from your tour are not included in the price of your trip. We encourage you to contact your local travel agent, or Better Travel, a Vermont-based agency (800.331.6996 or [bettertravel@madriver.com](mailto:bettertravel@madriver.com)), for any additional air, hotel, rail, or transfer arrangements you may need.

# Costa Rica at a Glance

## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

**U.S. citizens:** Passports are required and must be valid for at least six months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days.



For more information, see [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

## CURRENCY

Costa Rica uses the *colon* (CRC). For up-to-date exchange rates, see [oanda.com](http://oanda.com).

Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

### Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), and some dollars to exchange.

## TIME ZONE

Costa Rica is in the Central time zone. For more information on worldwide time zones, see [worldtimezone.com](http://worldtimezone.com).

## PHONE & INTERNET

Costa Rica country code: +506

Cell phone coverage throughout Costa Rica is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to [countrywalkers.com/phones](http://countrywalkers.com/phones).



Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.



## Travel Tip

*Pura Vida!* The expression for both hello and good-bye in Costa Rica that literally translates to “pure life” would be rendered more grammatically correct in Spanish as *vida pura*, so what does the expression actually mean? Most succinctly, perhaps “cool,” or perhaps “full of life” or “life is great,” or perhaps the French expression “la vie est belle” captures it best. For you to discover.

## LANGUAGE

The official language of Costa Rica is Spanish.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see [bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish](http://bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish) or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

## ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 120V and 60Hz is used in Costa Rica (like the United States). For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see [electricaloutlet.org](http://electricaloutlet.org).

## WEATHER

Costa Rica is a tropical country and has distinct wet and dry seasons. Some regions, however, have rain

year-round and others are very dry and sunny for most of the year.

Temperatures vary primarily with elevation, not with season. On the coast, it is hot year-round, while in the mountains, it can be cool at night. Generally speaking, the rainy season (or green season) is from May to mid-December, while the dry season (summer) is from mid-December to April. Even during the rainy season, days often begin with sunshine, with rain falling for short periods of time in the afternoon and evening.

Temperatures hover around 70 degrees year-round, with warmer temperatures on the coast and cooler temperatures in the mountains. Temperatures on the Pacific Coast will be warmer on average, with daytime temperatures reaching the high 80s and low 90s.

For up-to-date forecasts, see [qwikcast.com](http://qwikcast.com). For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com).

## HEALTH CONCERNS

No immunizations are required to enter Costa Rica, with the important exception that proof of yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers traveling from, or transiting through, a country with yellow fever transmission (this does not include North America). Always consult a travel clinic at a local university, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, and/or your personal physician for the most up-to-date recommendations and routine

vaccinations. Malaria medication, hepatitis, tetanus, typhoid, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella vaccinations are generally recommended for all travelers. For the threat of malaria, you should consult the CDC or your physician for the most current information. Important note: plan ahead for immunizations because some require administration several months prior to departure. The CDC provides the most current medical requirements and recommendations. Recommendations change frequently, so you must check directly with the CDC, a travelers' clinic, or other medical authority. See [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel) or telephone 877.394.8747.

## FOOD & DRINK



Rice and beans (*gallo pinto*) are the basic staples of Costa Rican meals and they accompany everything from eggs to steak to seafood. Appetizers (*bocas*) include black bean soup, stuffed tortillas, and *ceviche* (marinated seafood salad). A main course of chicken, beef, or seafood is often served with hearts of palm and plantains. Tropical fruits abound in Costa Rica, the most common of which are mangos, papayas, pineapples, and bananas. Cuisine in restaurants can vary from traditional Costa Rican to Italian and French. While we can certainly accommodate vegetarians on this tour, please bear in mind that the main source of non-meat protein is beans. Foods derived from soy protein are very rare. You may want to bring along any supplements you might need.

Although water in most of Costa Rica is said to be safe to drink, visitors sometimes become ill shortly after arriving. We therefore advise that you drink only bottled water. It is also wise to avoid eating foods sold by local street vendors, including fruits and vegetables. We recommend following the simple rule, "If you can't peel it, don't eat it." Avoid fresh salads, with the exception of those served in fine restaurants, and fruit juices unless they are 100 percent juice.

## LIFE IN COSTA RICA

### Shopping and banking hours

Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (and many close for one hour for lunch); most shopping malls are open continuously until 8:00 or 9:00 p.m.

Banks are open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday.



## Mealtimes

Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. In restaurants, lunch is served from 11:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (Costa Ricans typically eat on the later side). A 10:00 a.m. morning coffee break and 4:00 p.m. afternoon snack are also common.

### Travel Tip

What's a *Tico* or a *Tica*? The term Costa Ricans call themselves! It's derived either from the Spanish suffix for small—"ito"—or from *hermanitico* (little brother).

## Tipping

In restaurants, bars, and hotels (including room service) a 10 percent service charge is included, and it is not necessary to tip an additional amount. Taxi drivers do not get tipped, but you can round up the fare. For luggage assistance, tip 400 CRC per bag.

## Personal safety

Costa Rica requires the common sense and exercise of normal personal safety precautions that apply in many countries and cities worldwide; in addition to being aware of your surroundings, keep your valuables close and hidden while in public (avoid dangling cameras or other "tourist bait"), and avoid walking alone at night. Please follow accommodation and/or tour representative guidelines about securing valuables.

## TRAVEL RESOURCES

National Costa Rican tourist board official site  
[visitcostarica.com](http://visitcostarica.com)

### Public holidays

To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Costa Rican public holidays. Visit the Costa Rican tourist board's site for a list of public holidays and other events and festivals by month:

[visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/informacion.asp](http://visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/informacion.asp).

## TRAVEL IN COSTA RICA

A wealth of travel information is available at [visitcostarica.com](http://visitcostarica.com)

## Airports

The vast majority of international flights arrive at the international airport of San José, where there are connecting flights to other Costa Rican destinations. The city of Liberia's airport also receives flights from the U.S.

## Local Transportation

Traveling from one city or region of Costa Rica to another is easiest by air because of slow driving times.

In addition to domestic airlines, Costa Rica also has an extensive long-distance bus network; however, due to the road system, the bus rides can be very long. Most major car rental agencies are available, and again, while distances are great, you may wish to rent a car for a short trip. Taxis are available at all major airports, cities, and in smaller towns, and/or your hotel can usually provide assistance.

For more information, contact Country Walkers.



## Travel Tip

The traditional oxcarts of Costa Rica. The colorfully painted oxcart, or *carreta*, is Costa Rica's most famous traditional craft and a symbol of its agricultural heritage. Once regularly used to transport produce as well as people, the cart's spokeless wheels (which help the cart cut through mud) were originally painted in a pattern that identified the driver's origin.

Although still seen regularly in parades and other celebrations, today *carretas* are used as transport only in the most rural of regions. A souvenir distinct to Costa Rica, local artisans continue the tradition by constructing and richly decorating all sizes of oxcart from tabletop models to life-size replicas.

# Packing List

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## PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

## LUGGAGE REQUIREMENTS

This tour requires an internal flight. The airlines we fly allow a maximum of 30 pounds per person for checked baggage and a small handbag (10 pounds max) for the cabin; the aircraft do not have any overhead baggage compartments. Baggage over 30 pounds will be charged. We recommend that you verify with the airlines directly for any luggage weight restrictions, as these can change often. Country Walkers can arrange to store luggage for you on Day 5 of the tour and you will be reunited with it upon your return to San José. We encourage you to take this option and remind you to pack an extra duffel bag for this purpose.

## FOOTWEAR

- » Hiking boots or shoes. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots or shoes while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you are ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 4-6 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots or shoes with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain and water resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » River shoes or sandals (for possible river crossings and wet boat landings)

- » Alternate footwear to be kept dry for use at the lodge
- » Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

## **CLOTHING**

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants; synthetic materials are best as cotton stays wet; zip-off pants are suggested for maximum comfort
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)
- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual
- » Bathing suit
- » Light wool or fleece gloves and hat

## **OUTERWEAR**

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor

## **EQUIPMENT**

- » Pack (minimum size of 25L): large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of one liter). Bottled water will be provided daily to refill your personal water reservoirs.
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Small flashlight with extra batteries

- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of upon return to the hotel.
- » Personal first-aid kit including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container)
- » Telescopic walking sticks. (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore, please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)

### **OPTIONAL**

- » Binoculars for animal viewing
- » Travel alarm clock
- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen
- » Field guides (see enclosed reading list)
- » Folding umbrella
- » Bandana
- » Washcloth
- » Personal first-aid kit including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container)
- » Pepto-Bismol or other anti-diarrhea medication
- » Antihistamine or anti-itch cream for bites
- » Hand sanitizer and/or moist towelettes
- » Small locks for suitcases
- » Motion sickness bracelets or other non-sleep-inducing remedy if prone to motion sickness on bus or boat rides
- » Earplugs to aid sleep