

TRAVEL GUIDE

TELAMON TRAVEL

Costa Rica

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EDITION



Welcome to Costa Rica

Costa Rica is one of the rare destinations where nature shapes nearly every part of the experience.

Rainforests, volcanic landscapes, quiet beaches, thermal springs, and wildlife reserves are all woven into daily life here. Travel tends to feel active but unhurried, with days naturally balancing exploration, rest, and time outdoors.

From the cloud forests of Monteverde to the Pacific coastline and the volcanic region surrounding Arenal, Costa Rica offers a strong sense of place without requiring constant movement. The experience is less about checking off sights and more about how you move through the country.

This guide is your curated introduction to Costa Rica with practical insight, regional perspective, and thoughtful recommendations designed to help you travel comfortably and well.



AT A GLANCE

Capital: San José

Language: Spanish

Currency: Costa Rican Colón (CRC), with U.S. dollars widely accepted in many tourism areas

Time Zones: Central Standard Time (UTC-6), no daylight saving time

Visa Requirements: U.S. travelers typically do not need a tourist visa for short stays

Population: Approx. 5.17 million

Safety Index: Considered traveler-friendly with standard precautions recommended

When to Visit Costa Rica

HIGH SEASON | DECEMBER - APRIL

Ideal for: Coastal stays, wildlife viewing, sunshine, first-time visits

Costa Rica's dry season brings warm temperatures, lower rainfall, and ideal conditions across much of the Pacific coast. This is the country's busiest travel period, particularly around the holidays and spring break, with strong demand for resorts, villas, and guided experiences.

GREEN SEASON | MAY - NOVEMBER

Ideal for: Lush scenery, quieter resorts, nature-focused itineraries

The green season brings richer landscapes and a calmer pace. Rain typically arrives later in the day, leaving mornings open for touring, hiking, or beach time. This season often works especially well for travelers who value atmosphere, flexibility, and a more relaxed version of Costa Rica.

SHOULDER WINDOWS | MAY - JUNE & NOVEMBER

Ideal for: Balanced conditions, fewer crowds, strong overall value

These transitional periods often offer some of the best overall travel conditions, combining greener landscapes with manageable weather patterns and lower demand.



Top 5 Experiences in Costa Rica

01. EXPLORE THE ARENAL REGION

Arenal combines rainforest, waterfalls, thermal springs, wildlife, and soft adventure in one highly accessible region. It works particularly well for travelers who want variety without overcomplicating the itinerary.

02. EXPERIENCE COSTA RICA WITH A NATURALIST GUIDE

Wildlife encounters become significantly more meaningful with the right guide. Sloths, monkeys, toucans, frogs, and tropical birds are often far easier to spot with expert interpretation and local knowledge.

03. STAY ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST

Costa Rica's Pacific coastline ranges from polished resort areas in Guanacaste to quieter surf and wellness communities farther south. Each region offers a different pace and atmosphere.

04. BUILD WELLNESS INTO THE JOURNEY

Wellness here feels integrated rather than programmed. Thermal bathing, yoga, movement, fresh cuisine, spa rituals, and time outdoors all fit naturally into the rhythm of travel.

05. EXPERIENCE THE COUNTRY'S BIODIVERSITY

Costa Rica protects an extraordinary percentage of its land through parks and conservation areas. The result is a destination where wildlife and nature remain central to the experience rather than secondary to it.

We'll help design the right balance of rainforest, coast, wellness, wildlife, and downtime based on how you actually want the trip to feel.

EXPLORE COSTA RICA





More to Explore

Costa Rica's regions vary significantly in atmosphere, geography, and travel style. The best itineraries usually focus on two or three areas rather than trying to cover the entire country in one trip.

NOSARA

Known for wellness, surfing, and a slower coastal pace, Nosara appeals to travelers looking for a more grounded and understated beach experience.

MONTEVERDE

This cloud forest region offers cooler temperatures, suspension bridges, hiking trails, and strong biodiversity. It feels quieter and more immersive than many coastal areas.

OSA PENINSULA

Remote, biodiverse, and highly nature-focused, the Osa Peninsula is best suited for travelers who prioritize wildlife, rainforest immersion, and lodge-style luxury.

PAPAGAYO PENINSULA

One of Costa Rica's most refined resort regions, Papagayo combines luxury hospitality with easy airport access and protected coastal scenery.

TORTUGUERO

Accessible primarily by boat or small aircraft, Tortuguero offers a distinctly different side of Costa Rica centered around canals, rainforest, and wildlife.

Curated Tip: Costa Rica is far more enjoyable when travel days are minimized. We'll help route the itinerary realistically so the pace remains comfortable throughout.



Where to See Stunning Landscapes

Costa Rica's defining landmarks are natural rather than architectural. Volcanoes, forests, coastlines, waterfalls, and protected reserves shape the experience from region to region.

ARENAL VOLCANO

One of the country's most recognizable natural landmarks, Arenal anchors a region known for hot springs, rainforest trails, hanging bridges, and outdoor experiences.

MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST RESERVE

Mist, dense forest, and remarkable biodiversity define Monteverde. The area is particularly well known for birdlife, suspension bridges, and conservation initiatives.

MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK

This compact coastal park combines beaches and rainforest in a highly accessible setting. Wildlife sightings are frequent, particularly with guided touring.

CORCOVADO NATIONAL PARK

Located on the Osa Peninsula, Corcovado is one of the country's most biodiverse protected areas. The experience feels remote, immersive, and highly connected to nature.

RIO CELESTE

Known for its striking blue water, Rio Celeste is one of Costa Rica's most visually distinctive natural sites and pairs well with the northern rainforest regions.

Cultural Etiquette *and Smart Travel Tips*

Costa Rican culture is generally warm, relaxed, and community-oriented. Travelers who approach the destination with patience and respect often find interactions especially welcoming.

DO

- Greet people when entering restaurants or shops.
- Build flexibility into your schedule, particularly during green season.
- Respect wildlife and protected natural areas.
- Carry smaller bills for local purchases and gratuities.
- Allow time for slower meals and unhurried experiences.

DON'T

- Assume short distances always mean short drive times.
- Feed or approach wildlife.
- Leave valuables visible in vehicles or unattended on beaches.
- Over-schedule the itinerary with excessive regional movement.

Curated Tip: Costa Rica tends to reward travelers who leave room for flexibility. Some of the best moments happen outside the original plan.



A Taste of Costa Rica

Costa Rican cuisine is rooted in freshness, simplicity, and regional ingredients. Meals often center around rice, beans, tropical fruit, seafood, coffee, and produce grown throughout the country's volcanic landscapes and coastal regions. Dining here tends to feel relaxed and unfussy, with an emphasis on quality ingredients and natural flavor.

LOCAL STAPLES

- Gallo Pinto: Rice and beans commonly served at breakfast with eggs, plantains, tortillas, and fresh cheese.
- Casado: A traditional lunch plate featuring rice, beans, salad, plantains, and a choice of protein.
- Patacones: Fried green plantains served as a snack, appetizer, or side dish.
- Ceviche: Fresh seafood prepared with citrus, herbs, peppers, and local seasonings.

COASTAL DINING

Pacific and Caribbean regions each bring distinct influences to the table. Expect freshly caught fish, shrimp, lobster, octopus, and coconut-based dishes, particularly along the Caribbean coast where Afro-Caribbean flavors shape the cuisine.

COFFEE AND CACAO

Costa Rica's volcanic soil and varied elevations create exceptional growing conditions for both coffee and cacao. Private tastings, farm visits, and bean-to-bar experiences can add meaningful regional context to the itinerary.

TROPICAL FLAVORS

Mango, papaya, pineapple, passionfruit, guava, and watermelon appear frequently throughout the country, often in fresh juices, desserts, and cocktails.

SWEET FINISHES

Tropical fruit, coconut desserts, tres leches, and locally produced chocolate appear throughout the country.



Wellness in Costa Rica

Wellness in Costa Rica is closely connected to the environment itself. Rainforest settings, thermal springs, ocean air, movement, and time outdoors naturally shape the experience.

THERMAL SPRINGS AND VOLCANIC WELLNESS

The Arenal region is especially well known for thermal bathing experiences integrated into luxury resorts and spa environments.

YOGA AND MINDFUL TRAVEL

Nosara, Santa Teresa, and select coastal regions have become leading destinations for yoga, surf, and wellness-focused travel.

NATURE-LED RESTORATION

Forest walks, waterfall swims, ocean views, and slower mornings all contribute to the country's restorative atmosphere.

SPA EXPERIENCES

Many luxury properties incorporate local botanicals, volcanic minerals, cacao, and coffee into spa treatments and wellness programming.

Curated Tip: Costa Rica works particularly well for travelers looking to combine activity and restoration within the same itinerary.





Getting Around Costa Rica

Travel logistics in Costa Rica require more planning than many travelers initially expect. Terrain, weather, and road conditions can significantly affect travel times.

PRIVATE TRANSFERS

Private drivers are often the most comfortable and efficient way to move between regions.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

Small aircraft connections can reduce travel time considerably, especially when combining remote regions.

SELF-DRIVING

Rental cars can work well in select areas, though driving conditions may be challenging in remote or mountainous regions.

BOAT TRANSFERS

Some destinations, including Tortuguero and parts of the Osa Peninsula, require boat access.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Costa Rica maintains an extensive public bus network connecting major towns and regions. While affordable and widely used locally, buses are generally best suited to slower-paced, budget-oriented travel due to longer travel times and indirect routing between destinations.

Curated Tip: Realistic pacing matters in Costa Rica. We design itineraries to minimize exhausting transfer days and unnecessary backtracking.



Packing Tips for a Seamless Escape

Costa Rica's climate and terrain can shift quickly between regions, particularly when combining coastlines, rainforest, and higher elevations.

ESSENTIAL WARDROBE

- Breathable clothing for warm and humid conditions
- Comfortable walking shoes or trail shoes
- Swimwear and lightweight resort pieces
- A light layer for cooler mountain regions
- Quick-dry activewear for excursions and hikes

PRACTICAL MUST-HAVES

- Rain jacket or packable poncho
- Reef-safe sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Reusable water bottle
- Day bag or backpack for touring
- Waterproof pouch or dry bag

FOR ACTIVE ITINERARIES

- Water shoes
- Moisture-wicking socks
- Binoculars for wildlife viewing
- Secure sandals for outdoor activities

Curated Tip: Costa Rica's luxury culture is generally relaxed. Prioritize versatile, comfortable clothing over overly formal pieces.



Gratuities & Service Tips

Tippling in Costa Rica is appreciated throughout the tourism industry, particularly for guides, drivers, and hospitality staff. Many restaurant bills already include a 10% service charge, though additional gratuities for excellent service are always welcomed.

RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS

Additional 5–10% for excellent service if not already included.

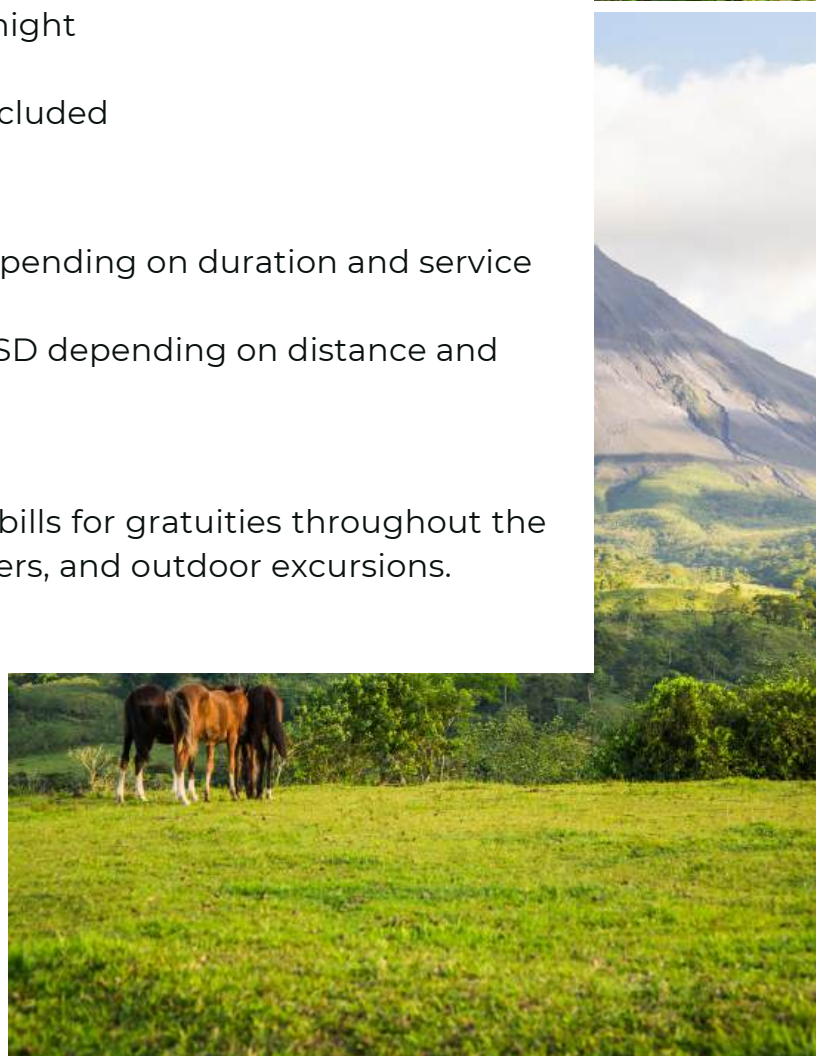
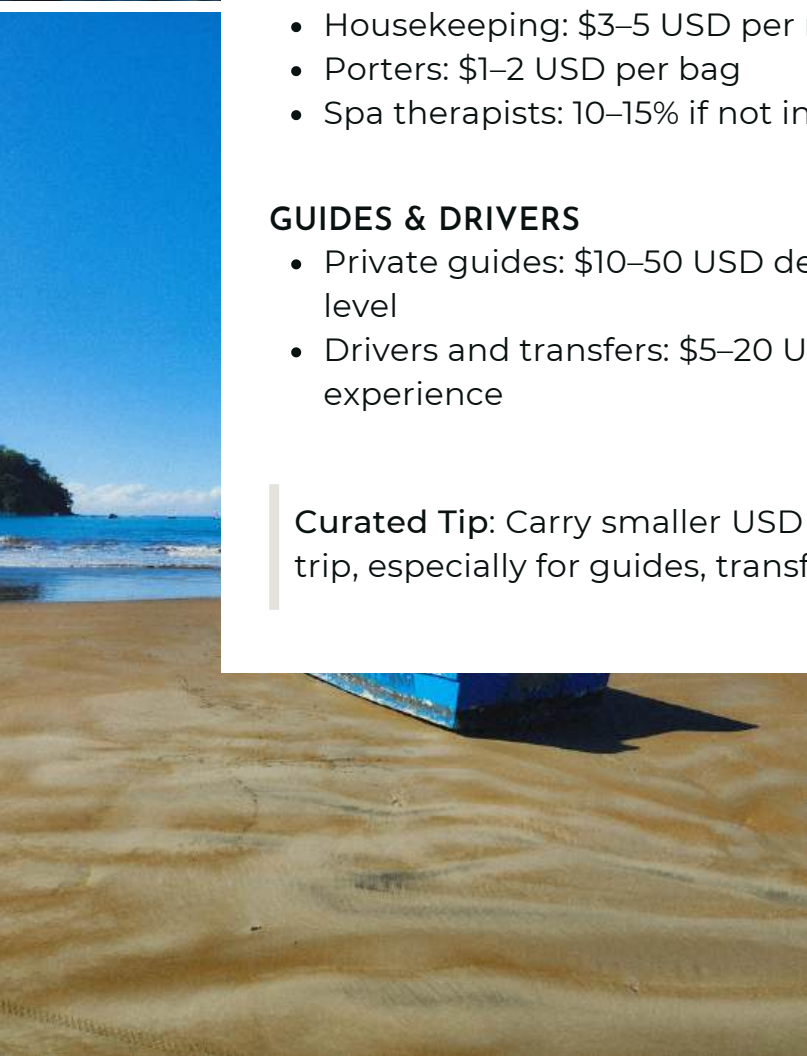
HOTELS & RESORTS

- Housekeeping: \$3–5 USD per night
- Porters: \$1–2 USD per bag
- Spa therapists: 10–15% if not included

GUIDES & DRIVERS

- Private guides: \$10–50 USD depending on duration and service level
- Drivers and transfers: \$5–20 USD depending on distance and experience

Curated Tip: Carry smaller USD bills for gratuities throughout the trip, especially for guides, transfers, and outdoor excursions.



Travel Safety Overview

Costa Rica is considered one of Central America's most established tourism destinations, with strong hospitality infrastructure and extensive experience hosting international travelers.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Most visits are smooth and comfortable with standard travel awareness.
- Petty theft can occur in busy tourism areas, beaches, and transit points.
- Guided touring and vetted transportation providers add meaningful peace of mind.

HEALTH AND PREPARATION

- Travel insurance is strongly recommended.
- Hydration, sun protection, and insect protection are important in many regions.
- Medical care and pharmacies are widely accessible in major tourism areas.

EMERGENCIES

- Emergency number: 911

Curated Tip: A well-routed itinerary, trusted guides, and thoughtfully selected accommodations make a significant difference in how relaxed and comfortable Costa Rica feels.





Designed Around You

Costa Rica offers a style of luxury grounded in nature, privacy, and pace.

Whether you're planning a wellness-focused retreat, a multi-region adventure, a refined coastal stay, or a family journey built around wildlife and outdoor experiences, we'll help design the trip in a way that feels thoughtful, balanced, and genuinely personal.

Laura + Ann



Every journey begins
with a conversation.

Laura Adams
Certified Travel Advisor

Ann Mayers
Travel Curator

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