

Captivating Costa Rica



TRIP OVERVIEW

Navigate Tortuguero National Park's snaking canals to spot wildlife, view the magnificent Arenal Volcano, discover the Monteverde Cloud Forest full of flora and fauna, and explore the diverse landscapes of Manuel Antonio National Park.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to Costa Rica. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Alajuela Province D

Depart London on your scheduled flight to San José. On arrival, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Enjoy a welcome dinner tonight with your group.

DAY 2: Alajuela Province to Tortuguero B/L/D

This morning you will leave Alajuela and start your journey to the mystical town of Tortuguero on the Caribbean coast. We schedule breakfast before leaving the hotel for your first taste of the traditional gallo pinto (black beans and rice), then a quick stop in Guapiles. Continuing your journey to the port you will travel through small villages and banana plantations. A gentle boat ride through the jungle canals will follow to arrive at your lodge in Tortuguero. Following lunch, travel by boat through the maze of canals within the national park, for the best chance to spot the wildlife of the rainforest. Tortuguero literally means 'region of turtles' and it is no surprise that it is home to seven species of turtles as well as being the most important nesting site for the green sea turtle. The area also contains a great diversity of crustaceans and many species of freshwater fish.

DAY 3: Tortuguero B/L/D

Following an early breakfast, start your day with a fascinating hike through the rainforest nature trails at your lodge, home to a diverse range of flora and fauna. Enjoy lunch at your lodge and then a visit to Tortuguero town. With no cars or streets, the town is sandwiched between a Caribbean beach on one side and waterways on the other. Spend some time exploring this charming town where you may even be lucky enough to spot some turtles nesting on the beach if you are travelling between July and October. The rest of the afternoon will be free to relax with dinner at your lodge.

DAY 4: Tortuguero to La Fortuna B/L/D

Travel back through the Tortuguero canals to reach the pier where your ground transportation will meet you. Travel by bus to La Fortuna with a stop for a traditional Costa Rican lunch.

DAY 5: La Fortuna B/L/D

Explore a private path around the base of the volcano and ascend to a lookout point to experience a fantastic view of the Arenal Volcano including the remains of the last volcanic eruption in 1968. Once you have completed the hike, you will visit the La Fortuna Village with free time for shopping and lunch.

DAY 6: La Fortuna B/L/D

Today you will visit Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge. One of the most important wetland areas in the world and a region of huge biological importance due to the immense variety of flora and fauna in the area. The refuge is home to several endangered species including cougars, jaguars and tapirs, and whilst these elusive animals are very difficult to see there

are several species of monkeys and a phenomenal variety of birdlife that are much easier to find. Later, enjoy the afternoon at leisure to visit the hot springs or relax and take in the views.

DAY 7: La Fortuna to Monteverde B/L/D

Monteverde is a world above the coastal towns at high altitude (1440m above sea level) allowing it to receive the steady supply of clouds and the life-giving moisture they contain. On the journey, take in the beautiful landscape of Lake Arenal and pass through some typical country villages, before visiting the Arenal Vida Campesina Cultural Experience. During the tour of the organic farm, we will enjoy the cultural activity of grinding sugar cane in the trapiche troja with a tasting of three different derivatives: sugar cane juice, guaro (national liquor), and peeled cane. Folkloric dances will be performed accompanied by music and colorful typical Costa Rican costumes. You will also be able to taste the fruits in the harvest of the farm and receive a tortilla class, where you will have to demonstrate your skills to knead and prepare the tortilla with the palms of your hands. In the end, you will be delighted with a delicious typical organic lunch prepared over wood and buffet style. Later, arrive at your hotel where you will be taken for an introduction to the town of Santa Elena, famous for one of South America's most resplendent birds, the Quetzal.

DAY 8: Monteverde B/L/D

Today's tour takes you high above the clouds to the Monteverde Cloud Forest. Here, clouds hover above the canopy of the forest before condensing on leaves creating a specialized ecosystem and habitat found nowhere else on earth. With the help of your guide, you will be able to spot some of nature's most splendid creations, from colourful butterflies, to lowly lizards and fearless primates; this forest is said to be home to over 3,000 known species. The morning will be spent in Sky Adventure Park. Here you will enjoy the flora and fauna of the area; The sky walk combines trails and suspension bridges, with lengths of 984 feet and heights above the canopy of Monteverde cloud forest. Lunch today will be at a family run kitchen at an ecological sanctuary. Your food will be prepared in front of you whilst you learn about the traditional recipes and dishes along with the opportunity to join in, perhaps becoming an expert in tortilla making by the end of the meal! The afternoon will continue at ground level as a gentle hike will allow you to closely examine some of the 500 species of orchids growing amongst the 3,000 varieties of plants on the moist forest floor.

DAY 9: Monteverde to Manuel Antonio B/L/D

Depart to Manuel Antonio. Make a stop en route at the Tarcoles River Bridge to see the giant crocodiles sunning themselves on the river banks below.

DAY 10: Manuel Antonio B/L/D

Visit the stunning Manuel Antonio National Park home to spectacular white-sand beaches, tropical lowland wet forest and coral reefs. The area is home to an astonishing variety of exotic wildlife that you can seek out on a guided rainforest walk from white-faced and squirrel monkeys to three toed sloths, iguana and toucans.

DAY 11/12: Manuel Antonio to San José to the UK or Extension B

Transfer to San José for your overnight, return flight back to the UK, or continue on to your chosen extension.

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience, location, comfort or character, and can range from hotels to lodges. Hotel accommodation is generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note there is no international classification system for hotels, and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Costa Rica. All group tours hotels have private bathroom facilities and air-conditioning, where needed. If you are staying in a lodge during your tour, plumbing and electricity supplies can vary and, in some cases, infrequent, with electricity only being accessible during certain times of the day. Rest assured that all accommodation used by Mercury Holidays is regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Please note the hotels listed on our website and brochure are provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner (when included) will be taken in local restaurants or at the hotel. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.



ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in San José you will be met by a representative from our local agent, **Best of Costa Rica**, holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/**Best of Costa Rica** representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your national guide will be on hand 24 hours a day should you have any queries, however if you need to contact your representative during your stay the details are:

Best of Costa Rica

Contact number: 00506 2290 1302

E-mail: ventas@bestcostaricadmc.com

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for **Best of Costa Rica**

Contact details:

24 hour telephone: 00506 8936 1212

24 hour email address: info@bestcostaricadmc.com

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

Visa Information

A visa is not required for your trip to Costa Rica. Further advice should be sought from the applicable tourist authority for other nationalities and for general queries. We strongly advise you check your destinations' Tourist Board or Embassy for the most up-to-date guidelines regarding passport validity. Please note if your flight is via America an ESTA will be required.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras. To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call 0800 781 4237 and quote 'WK830' for preferential rates. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip. You will also be joined by a local guide in each of the cities which you visit, ensuring that you always have first-hand knowledge. Should the tour not meet minimum numbers, then it will be operated with local guides only.

Private Tour

If you have booked a private tour then you will be accompanied by a Driver Guide or a Driver and Local Guides. These will be available to you during all scheduled sightseeing. Private Tours can depart on any day of the week depending on flight and train schedules and the opening days of the attractions. They will follow the itinerary as described in the brochure unless you have been advised otherwise and you will still have all of the same meals, sightseeing and local excursions included.

Tipping

It is at your discretion to tip both your driver and guide. We would recommend to tip approximately US\$5.00 (£3) per person per day for the tour guide and US\$3.00 (£2) per person per day for the driver. This is a total of US\$8 per person to budget for tips on your trip. As tipping is at your discretion, please tip as and when you feel appropriate too. Tips are accepted

in the local currency.

Health and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check any health and vaccination requirements applicable to your booked arrangements. We can only provide general information about this. Health and hygiene facilities and disease risks vary from country to country. You should take health advice about your own needs as early as possible and in good time before your departure. Sources of information include; www.fco.gov.uk, www.travelhealthpro.org.uk, www.hpa.org.uk, your General Practitioner or a specialist clinic.

Physical Accessibility

All our tours feature a "Tour Pace" to help find the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights, climb stairs and get on and off coaches and boats. The tour pace for Captivating Costa Rica is intermediate. A good level of fitness is required as you may be on your feet for approximately four hours in a day, though this will be interspersed with regular breaks and will vary from day to day. You will be walking around the sights, and may be getting on and off coaches, trains and boats and climbing steps which may be irregular. You will stay in variety of hotels throughout the tour. Our guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 10, and the maximum will be 40. If in the unlikely event there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date, then you may be asked to change to a different date and a full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Currency Exchange

The currency in Costa Rica is the Costa Rica Colon, known as CRC, but US Dollars are also widely accepted in the major cities. It is preferable if you have smaller denominations. We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. It is important that you budget carefully and ensure you have the right form of currency before you arrive in the country. Cash machines will also be available throughout the tour in order to withdraw money in your local currency.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases

such as souvenirs, laundry, any meals not included in the itinerary as well as drinks and any additional snacks. Approximately £200- £400 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour. It is a good idea to try and maintain a supply of small notes and change in the local currency for tipping or small purchases.

Credit Card Information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels.

Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in country are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction &/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

WHAT TO PACK

- Sunglasses, Sunscreen and hat in summer
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Camera and charger
- A plug adaptor - the electricity supply is 120 volts and 2 or 3 flat pin plugs
- Antibacterial hand gel
- Binoculars

- Personal first aid kit containing travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, antiseptic creams, aspirin etc
- Small day pack for excursions
- Waterproof, lightweight jacket
- Lightweight clothing
- Sweater and jacket for the cooler months

FLIGHT INFORMATION

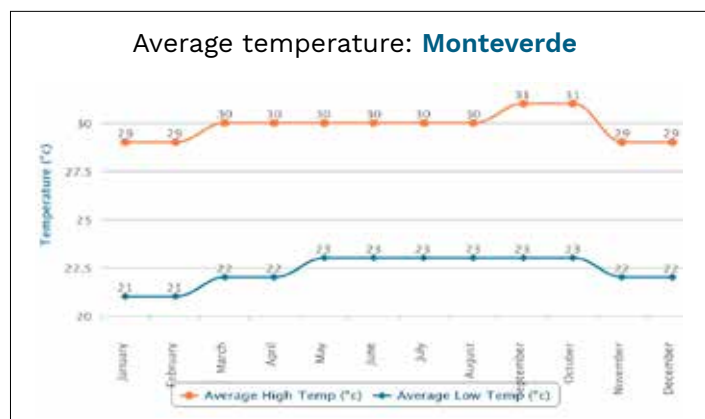
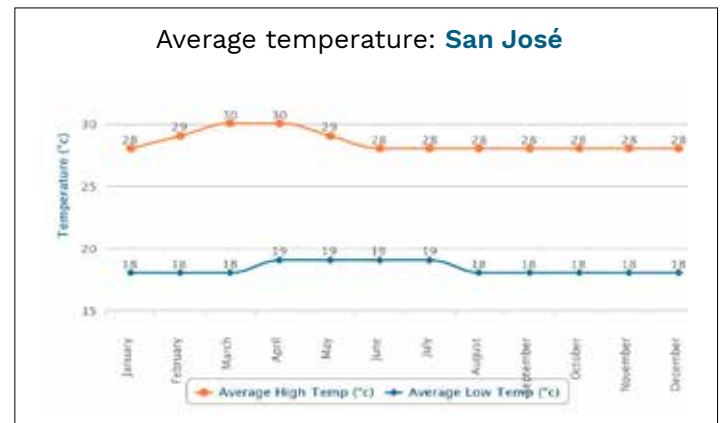
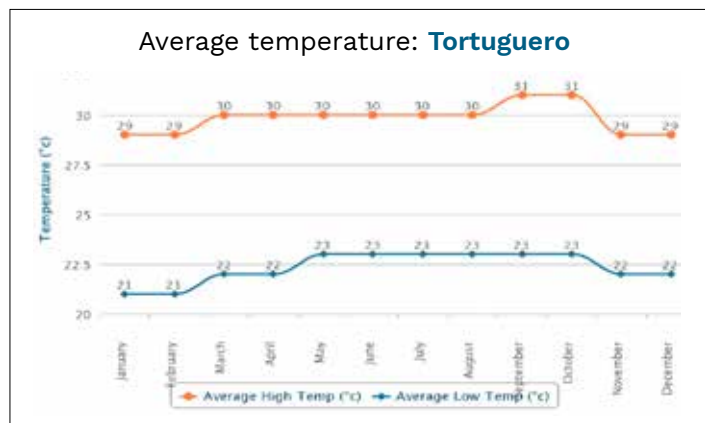
IMPORTANT: Please note that final flight details, including terminal, airline and baggage allowance, will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure. A printed E-ticket is no longer required at check-in, all you need to do is present your passport to the staff at the desk and your boarding pass will be given to you.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking, lounges or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras Tel. 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.



Manuel Antonio Beach Stay Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



TRIP OVERVIEW

Extend your stay in Costa Rica and spend four nights relaxing on the white sandy shores or choose to take part in some of the various activities on offer in the local area including hiking, guided tours and canopy walks.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your extension to Manuel Antonio.

Manuel Antonio

Situated close to the magical national park, Manuel Antonio is one of the most picturesque parts of Costa Rica's coastline, affording stunning views and beautiful beaches. Your stay on the white sandy shores offers the opportunity to take part in some of the various activities on offer in the local area including hiking, guided tours and canopy walks.

Hotel Information (4 nights)

Your stay will take place at one of the following resorts:

5★ El Parador Hotel on Bed & Breakfast

Address: Manuel Antonio Norte, Quepos 6350, Costa Rica,
Contact number: 00506 2777 1414

OR

4★ Hotel San Bada on Bed & Breakfast

Address: Manuel Antonio, Quepos 6350, Costa Rica
Contact number: 00506 2777 5333

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any lunches and dinners, as well as personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry and drinks.

Tour Guides

Your stay in Manuel Antonio is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.

Average temperature: **Quepos**



El Parador Hotel

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0333 003 0522**

Volcano Mini Tour

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



TRIP OVERVIEW

Extend your stunning Costa Rican experience with a 4-night Volcano Mini Tour and marvel at some of the most incredible natural creations in the world. From Poas Volcano National Park and Grecia, to the Irazú Volcano and the Valley of Orosi; this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to discover natural beauty at its most impressive.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your extension to Costa Rica.

Guide to meals included:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 11: Manuel Antonio to Alajuela

Transfer to Alajuela, Costa Rica's 2nd largest city. Upon arrival check-in to your hotel.

DAY 12: Poas Volcano National Park B/L

After breakfast you'll begin your journey to Poas Volcano National Park. Measuring an impressive 8,885 ft, this stratovolcano is 1,050 feet deep and its crater spans over a mile across. During your visit, you'll have time to enjoy the impressive main crater with its sulphur fumaroles. From here, enjoy a delicious lunch at Doka Estate and learn about the 'golden bean', a term used to describe the unique coffee of Costa Rica. The next stop for the day is to the town of Grecia; deemed one of the cleanest towns in Latin America, Grecia is home to one of the only metal churches in Central America. The final destination of the day is the town of Sarchi, known as the cradle of Costa Rican artists. Famed for their intricate and beautifully decorated oxcarts, the artists of this town are immensely proud of their creations and welcome visitors.

DAY 13: Irazu Volcano B/L

After an early breakfast you'll be picked up at your hotel. Today's tour will begin with a trek south along the Pan-American Highway until you reach the base of 'Iztaru', the name of an indigenous village situated on the flanks of the volcano, which is most likely the origin for the current name of the Irazu Volcano. Traversing the winding roads over fertile lands, you'll be treated to incredible panoramic views of the surrounding hills and valleys. If the weather is clear when you reach the top of the summit, enjoy breath-taking views of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Descending into the city of Cartago, the group will stop at the Virgin of the Angels Basilica, a famous pilgrimage site for many believers who undertake long pilgrimages to reach the site. Teeming with amazing vaulted ceilings and impeccable examples of stained-glass windows, this Basilica is a must-visit attraction. From here, you'll enjoy a visit to the

Lankester Gardens, a University of Costa Rica Centre that researches and protects more than 800 species of orchids, bromeliads and countless other plant species. To end the day, you'll continue to the Valley Orosi, an area that overflows with unrivalled beauty. Visit one of the few remaining colonial churches and enjoy a delightful traditional lunch at one of the local restaurants.

DAY 14: Alajuela B

This day is yours to spend at leisure.

DAY 15: Alajuela to the UK B

After breakfast transfer back to San José for your return flight to the UK.

Hotel Information (4 nights)

Your stay will take place at the following resort:

3★ Buena Vista Hotel on Bed and Breakfast

Address: Alajuela Province, Alajuela, Costa Rica

Contact number: 00506 2442 8595

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any lunches and dinners, as well as personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry and drinks.

Tour Guides

A full-time guide is not included for this extension. An English speaking guide is included for the excursions of the Póas Volcano + Doka Estate + Grecia + Sarchí and for the Irazú Volcano + Basilica de los Angeles + Lankester Botanical Garden + Orosi Valley

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0333 003 0522**