

CAPTIVATING COSTA RICA

San José, Tortuguero, La Fortuna Arenal Volcano & Monteverde



Explore some of the highlights of this incredibly beautiful country on our classic journey incorporating the very best that Costa Rica has to offer. Navigate the mystical waterways of Tortuguero National Park to spot unique wildlife, view the magnificent Arenal volcano, visit the spectacular La Fortuna Waterfall and discover the lush Monteverde Cloud Forest teeming with flora and fauna on this 9 day, 8 night tour. "Pura Vida", meaning "pure life", will be heard and felt throughout this enchanting tour.

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 flight details, visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to San José

Depart London on your scheduled flight to San José via Newark, USA. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel on the outskirts of the city.

DAY 2: San José to Tortuguero B/L/D

This morning you will leave San José and start your journey to the mystical town of Tortuguero on the Caribbean coast. A brief stop for breakfast will be made in a restaurant in the town of Guápiles for your first taste of the traditional gallo pinto (black beans and rice). Continuing your journey to the port you will travel through small villages as well as banana plantations. A gentle boat ride through the enchanting jungle canals will follow to arrive at your lodge in Tortuguero, one of the most remote places in Costa Rica. 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 rivers 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 late afternoon will be free to relax with dinner at your lodge.

DAY 3: Tortuguero B/L/D

Following an early breakfast, start your day with a fascinating hike through the trails of Tortuguero National Park, one of Costa Rica's most visited parks. Your guide will point out a diverse range of flora and fauna, from mantled howler monkeys swinging speedily through the trees to great green macaws singing to their mates, each visitor will spot something different to the next. Following lunch back at the lodge, the tour will return to the park to travel by boat through the maze of canals for the best chance to see all types of wildlife from 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 4: Tortuguero to La Fortuna Arenal Volcano

B/L/D

Leaving your lodge this morning, you will travel back through the canals to the port where our ground transportation will meet you to start your trip to the impressive Arenal area. Stop en route at Guápiles to enjoy a typical Costa Rican lunch before continuing on to visit the town of Sarapiquí to learn how the pineapple industry has developed in Costa Rica - you may never choose a pineapple in the same way again! A final stop is then made at El Muelle with the chance to see giant green iguanas before arriving at the Arenal Volcano area to check-in to your hotel which is strategically located to fully appreciate the true splendour of the towering volcano above.

DAY 5: La Fortuna Arenal Volcano B/L/D

Following breakfast, start your day of spectacular experiences with a visit to La Fortuna Waterfall whose waters emerge from the dense jungle before plummeting into the emerald waters below. Your guide will lead you down the steps of the trail to the cool waters for a swim or a chance to relax in the shade and take in the tranquil surroundings before returning to the top. After lunch in a typical local restaurant there is a little time to explore the charming town of Fortuna which became the central town in the region after the 1968 eruption wiped out the surrounding settlements. In the afternoon you will be led along a private 4.5 kilometre path around the base of the volcano, passing through old lava trails from past eruptions and a chance to spot a wide variety of flora and fauna including sloths, monkeys, toucans, wild turkeys and other birds. Ascend to a lookout point to experience a fantastic view of the Arenal Volcano with its perfectly symmetrical shape making it a sightseer's dream. However tempting, don't take any lava blocks from the trail as it is considered to be bad luck! Once back at your hotel there is the option to relax in the Tabacon Hot Springs which is chargeable locally, or alternatively simply take some time to relax before your evening meal.

DAY 6: La Fortuna Arenal Volcano to Monteverde

B/L/D

After breakfast, your tour will continue to the Monteverde Cloud Forest, a small community located at the top of the Tilarán Mountain Range and an important ecotourism destination in Costa Rica. 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. Your lunch stop will be at a wonderful local ranch, where you will be served a

traditional local meal along with a folklore dance presentation by school children, plus the chance to visit the coffee plantations on the grounds. Before arriving at your hotel, 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 7: Monteverde B/L/D

Today's itinerary takes you high above the clouds to the Monteverde Cloud Forest. Here the eerie clouds hover above the canopy of the forest before condensing on leaves creating an extremely humid and moisture-rich environment perfect for an abundance of biodiversity to thrive in. These unique climates and specialized ecosystems create habitats 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 wildly colourful butterflies, to low-lying lizards and fearless primates, this forest is said to be home to over 3,000 known species. The morning will be spent in Selvatura Park and explored via the 1.9 mile long treetop walkways taking you close to the cloud-forest canopy and allowing you excellent vistas of the forest below. 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 8: Monteverde to San José B/L/D

After breakfast begin the journey back to San José. On arrival you will commence a city tour to visit some of the residential and embassy areas before driving through the city past historical buildings and stopping in the downtown area for lunch at a local restaurant. Following some time for pictures around the national theatre you can enjoy a walk along the pedestrian avenue and take a local bus to visit some ancient houses. Finally the tour will finish at a souvenir centre where you can see a range of wood and leather craft markets. Here your tour finishes, your final dinner being taken at a local restaurant with your fellow group members with whom you can share and reminisce over the highlights of this spectacular trip.

DAY 9: San José to the UK or Extension B

After breakfast you will be transferred to San José Airport for your return flight to the UK via Newark, or continue on to your extension.

Your hotels

San José (2 nights): 4★ Country Inn & Suites - San Antonio de Belen, San Jose (Heredia), 357 2120, Costa Rica, Contact number: 00506 2239 2272

Tortuguero (2 nights): 3★ Pachira Lodge - Pachira Lodge Tortuguero, Contact number: 00506 2257 2242

La Fortuna (2 nights): 4★ Arenal Springs - Arenal Camino al Volcan, La Fortuna, Costa Rica, Contact number: 00506 2479 1212

Monteverde (2 nights): 4★ El Establo - Puntarenas, Costa Rica Contact number: 00506 2645 5110



All accommodation is 3★ or 4★ and features an en suite bathroom, air-conditioning/heating and TV. Sunspot has visited and inspected all of the hotels to ensure that they meet the high standards of service which we require for our clients. If the hotels detailed are not available, alternatives will be used of a similar standard. Final confirmation of your hotels will be sent in a document approximately two weeks before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will either be taken at your hotel/lodge or in local restaurants. Pachira Lodge does not feature a TV and air conditioning/heating.

On your arrival

On your arrival in San Jose you will be met by a representative from our local agent in Costa Rica holding a sign displaying: "Sunspot". The Sunspot/Best of Costa Rica representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact Best of Costa Rica during your stay the details are:

Best of Costa Rica

Urbanización El Robledal, La Uruca, San José, 400 Norte y 100 Este de Hotel Barceló San Jose Palacio Contact number: 00506 2290 1302

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details
Best of Costa Rica
Contact Sergio Hidalgo Piedra
Telephone number Office: 00506 2290 1302 Mobile: 00506 8710 8888

Visa and Passport advice - IMPORTANT

UK passport holders are not currently required to obtain a visa for Costa Rica prior to travel. However, as your flights go via the USA, you will need to obtain an ESTA. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange the visa on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Sunspot". Alternatively, if you wish to apply for the ESTA yourself, you can find details on how to do this on the ESTA website <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>. All UK passport holders **must have** a bio-metric epassport and your passport must be valid for at least 6 months from the date you are expected to arrive back in the UK. Importants note: if you do not have a bio-metric epassport, you will be **refused entry** into the USA. Further visa advice should be sought from the applicable tourist authority for other nationalities and for general queries. We strongly advise you to check with your destinations' Tourist Board or Embassy for the most up to date guidelines regarding required passport validity.

Insurance

You must obtain suitable travel insurance prior to departure. Sunspot is partnered with Holiday Extras which offer insurance at the following prices:

Age in years	Up to 10 days	Up to 17 days
18-30 years	£26	£27
31-50 years	£28	£31
51-60 years	£30	£33
61-64 years	£37	£42
65-69 years	£65	£69
70-74 years	£72	£79
75-85 years	£104	£135

Prices are for worldwide insurance, excluding the USA. For all persons 86 years and over, please contact us for insurance prices. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Sunspot 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 and will have a guide with you for the duration of your trip, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory and is at your discretion. However it is customary to tip both your driver and guide for good service. If you wish to tip we recommend around US\$5.00 (£3) per person per day for the tour guide and US\$3.00 (£2) per person per day for the driver. You may give the tips to the guide and driver personally at the end of the tour for your convenience. Tips are accepted in any currency,

Health and Vaccinations

We recommend that you consult your local GP for advice on travel health/vaccinations before departure. It is not advisable to drink the tap water.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with an average level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves full days of sightseeing, often on foot and includes some hiking, trekking, climbing of stairs and getting on and off of coaches and boats. **This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties.**

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 then you may be asked to change to a different date. 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. Cash machines will also be available throughout the tour in order to withdraw money in the local currency.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry and extra drinks and snacks. Approximately £200-£400 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour.

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. 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 and/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

- Sunscreen, insect repellent and hat
- Waterproof lightweight jacket
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Lightweight clothing (jeans are not recommended)
- Sweater
- Camera and charger
- Small day pack for hikes/treks
- Swimwear
- Lightweight/travel towel
- A plug adaptor - the electricity supply is 120 volts and 2 or 3 flat pin plugs
- Binoculars

Flight and Airport Information

Your flight is to **San Jose Airport** with **United Airlines (UA)**, departing from **London Heathrow Terminal 2**.

Route	Depart	Arrive	Flight Duration	Flight Number
Heathrow - Newark (USA)	12:35	16:05	8 hours 30 minutes	UA16
Newark (USA) - San José	17:48	22:15	5 hours 27 minutes	UA1082
San José - Newark (USA)	12:45	19:04	5 hours 19 minutes	UA1081
Newark (USA - Heathrow)	20:55	09:25	7 hours 30 minutes	UA17

IMPORTANT: Please note that all flight times/numbers are given for guidance and are subject to change. Final flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Please note: Return flights could possibly return via Houston instead of Newark but confirmation of this will be sent to you at least ten days before.

Baggage Allowance

Baggage allowance (per person): Each passenger is entitled to 23kg of hold luggage plus 1 item of hand luggage not exceeding 56cm x 35cm x 22cm in size and one personal item (such as a handbag or laptop case) not exceeding 43cm x 22cm x 25cm. Weight restrictions will be finalised on your E-ticket receipt. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay extra at check-in. Check-in should be at least 3 hours before departure.

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.

