

Best Of Costa Rica



TRIP OVERVIEW

Explore mystical waterways and wildlife rich National Parks emerging from this biodiverse wonderland. Trace along old lava flows at the foothill of Arenal Volcano, walk above rainforest canopies in Selvatura 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 flight details, 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 Jose and meet your tour guides upon arrival. Transfer to tonight's hotel and become acquainted with your fellow travellers during a welcome dinner this evening.

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

Savour your first taste of traditional gallo pinto (black beans and rice) during breakfast at the hotel before travelling to the enchanting town of Tortuguero on Costa Rica's biodiverse Caribbean Coast, stopping en route in Guapiles. Arrive at your lodge for a lunch before departing on your first excursion visiting Tortuguero, the 'home of the turtles'. With the rest of your afternoon at leisure, explore Tortuguero's exotic beaches and be sure to look out for endearing turtles who are renowned for nesting upon the sandy shores (from July through mid October).

DAY 3: Tortuguero B/L/D

Embark on a captivating nature hike through well-established rainforest trails, nestled within Tortuguero National Park; watch as mantled howler monkeys swing through the treetops, and listen to the tuneful changing of green macaws during this truly unforgettable experience. This afternoon, cruise Tortuguero's intricate rivers for the best glimpse of the park's most famous residents.

DAY 4: Tortuguero to La Fortuna B/L

Return through a system of snaking canals before continuing to Arenal, whose dramatic landscape is spectacularly dominated by the mighty Arenal Volcano. Pause en route to enjoy a traditional Costa Rican lunch.

DAY 5: La Fortuna B

A verdant haven framed by the grandiose Arenal Volcano, enjoy a scenic morning tour of the town of La Fortuna before tracing old lava flows around a private 4.5km hiking trail at its base. Along the way, discover wild sloths, monkeys and toucans inquisitively peer out of their fertile habitats, and relish in vistas overlooking the imposing Volcano. Return to your hotel for some time at leisure, or alternatively, relax in a serene web of natural thermal springs at Tabacon Hot Springs (at a fee).

DAY 6: La Fortuna to Monteverde B/L

A picturesque journey from Arenal zigzags through a landscape of surpassing beauty; from rustic villages, rolling hills and the panoramas of stunning Lake Arenal, arrive in time for lunch at a hospitable ranch in the small community of Monteverde Cloud Forest. Dine on a flavourful traditional meal whilst enjoying a folklore dance presentation, before visiting a prospering coffee plantation which harvests one of Costa Rica's greatest agricultural produces. Prior to arriving at tonight's hotel, stop off in the town of Santa Elena, known as the home to one of South America's most mesmerising birds, the Quetzal.

DAY 7: Monteverde B/L/D

Soaring high above the clouds, bask in a vision of tranquillity in Monteverde Cloud Forest this morning, observing a hazy mist which drifts under the cloudforest; teeming with an astonishing 3000 species, witness some of nature's most stunning creatures, ranging from vibrant butterflies to prowling primates who reside in this biodiverse oasis. Delight in awe-inspiring jungle views from the dizzying heights of Selvatura Park's Treetop walkways before indulging in a delicious lunch, freshly prepared in front of your eyes. Laden with an enormous selection of colourful orchids, conclude today with a gentle hike in the tropical lowlands of the Ecological Sanctuary, a small patch of rainforest with an incredible variety of birds, mammals, plants and insects.

DAY 8/9: Monteverde to the UK or Extension B

Transfer to San Jose airport for your return flight 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. No air conditioning in Tortuguero lodge. 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.

ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in San Jose 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: mercuryholidays@bestcostaricadmc.com



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.

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: mercuryholidays@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.

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 per person per day for the tour guide and US\$3.00 per person per day for the driver. This is a total of USD64 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 and US Dollars.

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. Our tour paces are marked with dots out of 3, with the differences being as follows:

- 1 Dot the tour is Easy-Going
- 2 Dots the tour is Intermediate
- 3 Dots the tour is Advanced

Best of Costa Rica is rated as 2 Dots meaning that the tour pace 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 endeavor 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 8 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 alcoholic 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

Your flight is to San Jose Airport with British Airways (BA), departing from London Gatwick South Terminal.

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

Baggage Allowance

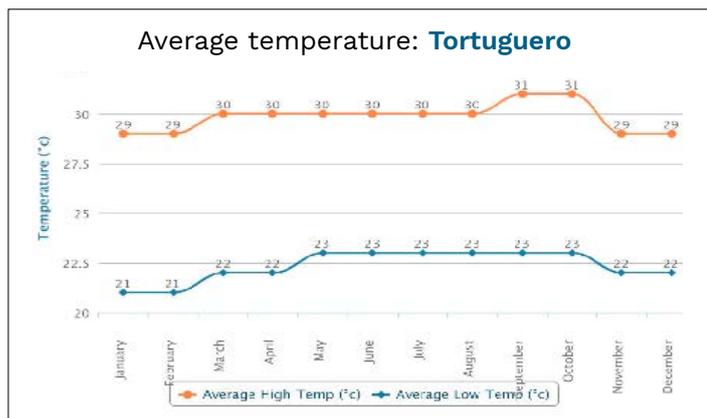
Each passenger is entitled to 23KG of hold luggage plus 1 item of hand luggage not exceeding (Max 23kg - 56cm/45cm/25cm) in size and 1 personal item such as a handbag, briefcase or laptop case. Weight restrictions will be finalized on E-ticket receipt. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will 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 or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras on 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

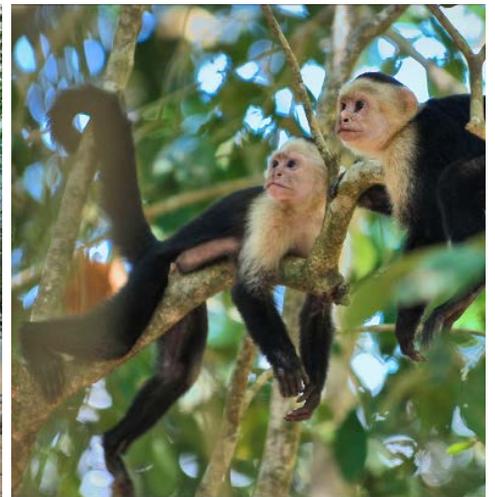
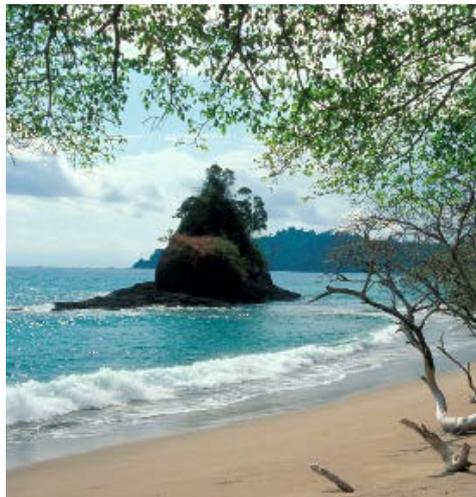
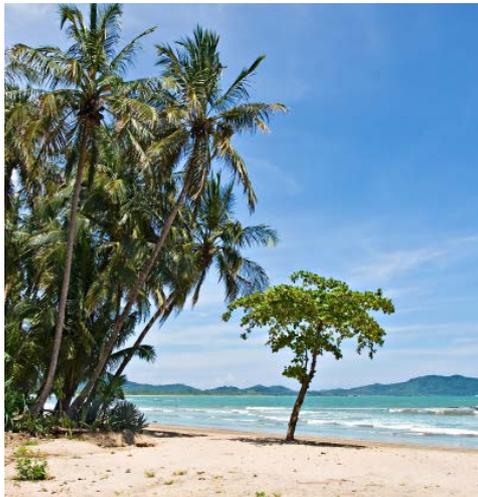
WEATHER AND CLIMATE

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 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

Extend your stay in Costa Rica and spend three 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★ San Bada on Bed & Breakfast

Address: Manuel Antonio, Quepos, Aguirre.
 Contact number: 00506 2777 5333

OR

4★ Si Como No on Bed & Breakfast

Address: Calle Principal Km 3, Provincia de Puntarenas, Quepos, Costa Rica

Contact number: 00506 2777 0777

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

Personal Expenses

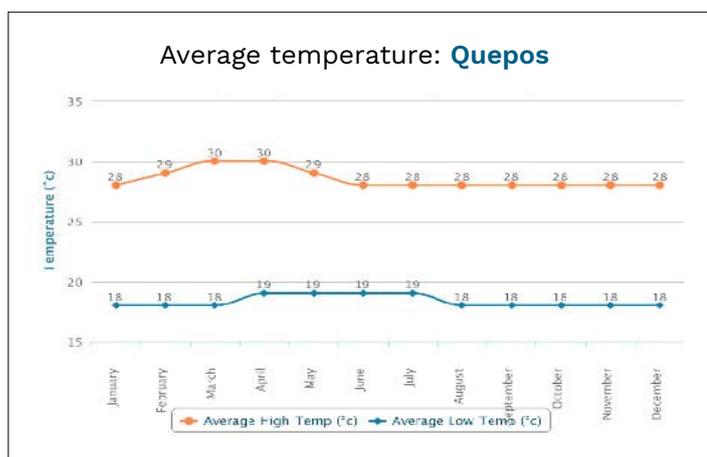
You will need to take money with you to cover any lunches and dinners, as well as personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry and drinks.

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.



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 **0843 224 0723**

Punta Leona Beach Stay

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

Located on Costa Rica's western coastline, Punta Leona is a 750-acre private nature reserve. Populated by unique flora and fauna, the area provides insight into the country's rich biological diversity while its white sandy beach is one of the best in Costa Rica.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

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

Punta Leona

Enjoy the powder-soft sands of the Punta Leona area. In addition, nearby Carara National Park offers excellent birdwatching opportunities while visitors can also participate in a number of watersports or strike out on a hiking trail through the lush surrounds.

Hotel Information (4 nights)

Your stay will take place at the following resort::

3★ Punta Leona Hotel on Bed & Breakfast

This hotel is ideal for a relaxing, sun-soaked getaway and boasts direct beach access, a spa and swimming pool. Other amenities include mini golf, bar, restaurant, tropical gardens. Comfortable rooms offer an in-room safe, telephone, air conditioning, hair dryer, mini refrigerator and cable TV.

Address: Punta Leona Garabito, PU, Herradura, Costa Rica.

Contact number: 00506 2231 3131

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 Punta Leona is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.



Punta Leona Hotel



Punta Leona Hotel

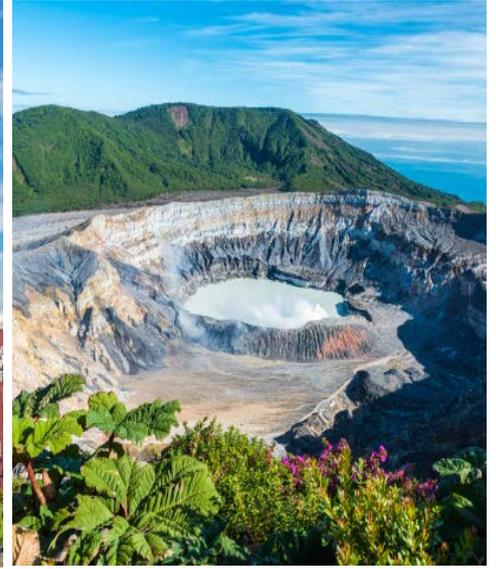
FLIGHT INFORMATION

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 **0843 224 0723**

Volcano Mini Tour

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

Extend your stunning Costa Rican experience with a 3-day 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 indigenous village of 'Iztaru' 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 9: Monteverde to Alajuela

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

DAY 10: 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 dean', 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. To get a real feel of the town, you also take a trip to the central market area to pick up some souvenirs. 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 ox carts, the artists of this town are immensely proud of their creations and welcome visitors.

DAY 11: 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 peregrination 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 12: Alajuela B

This day is yours to spend at leisure.

DAY 13: Alajuela to the UK B

After breakfast transfer back to San Jose 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

Your stay in Costa Rica will be accompanied by an English speaking guide.

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 **0843 224 0723**