

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Costa Rica: Wildlife & Tropical Landscapes

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Costa Rica: Wildlife & Tropical Landscapes

Small Group Adventure

Costa Rica: San José, Muelle, Arenal, Monteverde, Manuel Antonio, San Gerardo de Dota

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

13 days starting from \$3,295

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/bcr2025pricing

Visit Costa Rica, a kaleidoscope of natural beauty: the brilliance of a Blue Morpho Butterfly ... the inquisitive look of a giant Green Iguana ... a Resplendent Quetzal gliding through the trees. As we travel from volcanic mountain ranges to misty cloud forests, our small group will explore this biodiversity up close. And we'll also mingle with Costa Rica's people, whether sharing a meal at the home of a local family, or visiting the children of a village school.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 12 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 29 meals—12 breakfasts, 10 lunches, and 7 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 9 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next O.A.T. trip

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 5 locations in 13 days with two 1-night stays and some early mornings.

Physical requirements: Three overland drives of up to 4 hours, some of which are on unpaved or bumpy roads. Brief travel to elevation of 12,000 feet and an overnight stay at 7,200 feet.

Flight Time: Travel time will be 3-12 hours and will most likely have one connection.

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/bcr

COSTA RICA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Meet locals living in Poás during a visit to a family-owned coffee *finca* (plantation) where farmers will show us how to grow, harvest, and package coffee. Plus, enjoy two opportunities to connect with local families over traditional Costa Rican *casado*—a meal that typically contains rice, beans, plantains, salad, and *picadillo*: first during a **Home-Hosted Lunch** in the village of Santa Esperanza.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Meet female entrepreneurs during **A Day in the Life** of the Santa Esperanza community, and learn about the village's next generation of leaders when you visit the local school, which is supported by **Grand Circle Foundation**. Plus, delve into **Controversial Topics** impacting Costa Rica during enlightening conversations with locals.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to San José, Costa Rica
2-4	Muelle
5-7	Monteverde
8-9	Manuel Antonio National Park
10-11	San Gerardo de Dota
12	San José
13	Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Costa Rica's Pacific Coast: Drake Bay & Corcovado National Park
PRE-TRIP: 3 nights from **\$1,195**

Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast: Tortuguero National Park
POST-TRIP: 3 nights from **\$995**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **San José** before your Pacific Coast pre-trip extension or before your main adventure from **\$130** per room, per night

Costa Rica: Wildlife & Tropical Landscapes

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Costa Rica's Pacific Coast: Drake Bay & Corcovado National Park*

Day 1 Depart U.S. • Arrive San José, Costa Rica

Day 2 San José • Fly to Drake Bay • Explore Cocolito Beach

Day 3 Drake Bay • Discover Corcovado National Park • Explore by kayak or canoe

Day 4 Drake Bay • Fly to San José • Begin main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S. • Arrive San José, Costa Rica

- Destination: San José
- Accommodations: Autentico Hotel or similar

Afternoon/Evening: You depart from the U.S. and fly to San José, Costa Rica. An O.A.T. representative will greet you at the airport and assist with the transfer to your hotel, where travelers who took the pre-trip extension to *Costa Rica's Pacific Coast: Drake Bay & Corcovado National Park* will also be arriving. You'll also join travelers who arrived early in San José before the main adventure.

Day 2 San José • Visit coffee plantation • Overland to Muelle

- Destination: Muelle
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Tilajari Hotel & Resort or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Begin today with a Welcome Briefing at the hotel led by your Trip Experience Leader. Then, we'll drive northwest from San José into

the northern lowlands of Costa Rica along the Pan-American Highway. As we travel through the countryside outside of San José, we'll have many sweeping views of the country's agricultural landscapes. We'll stop en route to visit a family-owned coffee *finca* (plantation).

As we tour the farm with the owner, we'll see the various steps in the production of this important national export, and learn about the history of coffee's introduction to Costa Rica. We'll delve into how the combination of rich mountain soil and a near-perfect coffee-growing climate made it a natural crop for the country, and why locals call the coffee bean the *grano d'oro*, or golden seed. We'll also have opportunities to interact with the farmers and get hands-on experience with the production process. By the end of the tour, you may have a newfound appreciation for the cup of coffee you can enjoy as we sit down for an included lunch at the *finca*.

Lunch: At the *finca* featuring traditional Costa Rican cuisine.

Afternoon: We'll depart the farm and continue our drive to our hotel in Muelle. Along the way, we'll make a brief stop to stretch our legs and take in the surrounding views of the Costa Rican countryside. Upon arrival in Muelle, we'll check in to our hotel and receive room assignments. After settling in, you'll have some free time for your own discoveries.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll listen to the sounds of the rainforest at night as the Costa Rican stars shine above, or retire to your room to rest up before tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 3 Muelle • Cruise the Río Frío • Optional Evening Nature Walk tour

- Destination: Muelle
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Tilajari Hotel & Resort or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we travel to Costa Rica's remote northern border, near the Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge. We'll drive to a dock, where we'll board a small touring boat to explore the Río Frío, a complex inland waterway where we'll likely see wading birds—like Northern Jacanas and Wood Storks—as well as many turtles and butterflies. Keep your binoculars and camera ready—we might be lucky enough to spot larger animals, like spider or howler monkeys, sloths, and caimans that live by the river.

Lunch: At a local tourist center, featuring regional cuisine cooked for us by a local.

Afternoon: After our visit, we'll drive back to our hotel, where we have some free time. Perhaps you'll venture to Paradise Hot Springs to relax and soak in the volcanic thermal waters, or if you're looking for something more adventurous, perhaps you might explore the rainforest during a horseback riding tour.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll retire to your room. Or, you may choose to embark on an optional nature walk tour. With the help of an expert guide, we'll experience another side of Costa Rica's rain forests as we set off on a nature walk after dark in search of nocturnal animals like snakes, sloths, and frogs. After, we'll walk back to the hotel as a group.

Day 4 Muelle • *A Day in the Life of* Santa Esperanza village • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Santa Esperanza School • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: Muelle
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Tilajari Hotel & Resort or similar

Activity Note: Please note that we are unable to visit the local elementary school on weekends or during the months of December–March.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll drive to Santa Esperanza, a rural hamlet of just 250 residents where we'll enjoy our *A Day in the Life* experience.

As we make our way through the Costa Rican countryside, we'll witness some pineapple plantations, as well as a sight you might not expect in this famously eco-conscious country: industrial buildings, heavy machinery, and clear-cut forests. They're all by-products

of Costa Rica's extremely profitable (and controversial) commercial pineapple industry, which we'll learn more about later today.

We'll make a quick stop along the way at a market to pick up ingredients for today's **Home-Hosted Lunch**, and perhaps a gift for our hosts. As we peruse the local products, we'll have the opportunity to interact with the vendors and the *ticos* (what local Costa Ricans call each other) shopping alongside us.

Upon arrival in Santa Esperanza, we'll be joined onboard the bus by a member of Santa Esperanza's Women's Association and our guide for our **A Day in the Life** experience. Our host is a member of the local Women's Association—a support network and chamber of commerce for Santa Esperanza's female-run businesses, which range from crafts, to agriculture, and tourism. She will tell us more about the Association as we make the rest of the drive through town.

Rambling and remote, with no central square or master layout, Santa Esperanza is the definition of rural, where modest homes spring up unexpectedly along the curves and dips of the dirt roads. We may witness locals tending to their small plots of farmland or see teenagers running across the soccer field en route to our destination: the Santa Esperanza School, which is supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**.

Grand Circle Foundation

Santa Esperanza School

Total donated: **\$60,000**

Partner since: **2019**

Built in 1995, the Santa Esperanza School is the sole elementary school in town. For nearly 15 years, all students—regardless of age or grade level—were taught in the same classroom. Thanks to our travelers' generosity, Grand Circle Foundation funded the construction

of two furnished classrooms and two bathrooms, enabling the school's 45 students to receive more tailored instruction with fewer distractions.

Upon arrival, we'll be welcomed by the school's principal and the students. While the school has three teachers on staff, the students do not receive English lessons—so today, you'll be their fourth instructor as you teach them colors, numbers, or the alphabet. You'll also have an opportunity to tour the facility and learn more about the education system in Costa Rica. School is free and compulsory for all children ages four through 17, and the country boasts the highest literacy rate in Central America at nearly 98%. Before our visit concludes, you'll have ample time to ask the principal or teachers any additional questions you may have.

Lunch: We'll have even more opportunities to connect with local businesswomen when we join them for a **Home-Hosted Lunch**. For a more intimate cultural experience.

We'll enjoy a **Home-Hosted Experience** with these locals to develop personal connections with our hosts. After meeting the members of our host family, they'll take us on a tour of their home. The preferred lunch in Costa Rica is *casado*, which features an array of dishes, including rice, beans, a protein, salad, *picadillo* (meat and vegetable hash), and sweet plantains.

As you dine on homemade specialties, you'll learn more about what life is like in Santa Esperanza.

Afternoon: We'll say goodbye to our gracious hosts and begin making our way back to our hotel.

Upon arrival, the remainder of the afternoon is yours. Perhaps you'll rest, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for activity suggestions.

Later, you can join your Trip Experience Leader for an optional excursion to the town of La Fortuna. You'll drive to the town center, where you can explore on your own.

Dinner: On your own. If you decided to venture to the town of La Fortuna, then ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. A popular dish you may wish to seek out is Costa Rican-style *chifrijo*, typically made with rice and pork. If you stayed at the hotel, you can enjoy dinner at the hotel restaurant.

Evening: Those in Fortuna will drive back to the hotel. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll retire to your room to rest before tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 5 Boat ride on Lake Arenal • Overland to Monteverde Cloud Forest

- Destination: Monteverde
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: El Establo Mountain Resort or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of the hotel and drive to Arenal Volcano. When we arrive, we'll take a nature walk through Arenal Volcano National Park, taking in the beauty of the surroundings as we make our way through the jungle. Then, we'll board a boat and cruise Lake Arenal. We enjoy views that can range from the cone of the Arenal Volcano in the distance to the verdant lakeshore. Cruising along the waters, we may spot more of Costa Rica's diverse birds and wildlife.

Lunch: Aboard the boat.

Afternoon: We disembark our boat and continue our drive, sometimes over unpaved roads, to the Monteverde Cloud Forest, enjoying

the scenery as we climb to Monteverde's 5,000-foot elevation. Monteverde is renowned for its unique environment and diversity of natural life. The mountainsides on which the forest is located trap the warm, humid air rising from the ocean, creating dense clouds that provide near-constant moisture, supporting a large number of plant species. Then, we'll arrive at our hotel to check in and receive our room assignments.

Our hotel here is near the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve, a protected area where this exceptional natural diversity is preserved. After settling in, enjoy some free time to relax or enjoy the hotel amenities.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll take a Night Walk, an activity offered through the hotel, where you can witness the sunset and the forest's eclectic night life in the company of a local guide.

Day 6 Nature walk in Monteverde Cloud Forest • Optional Forest Canopy tour

- Destination: Monteverde
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: El Establo Mountain Resort or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to explore the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve today. Upon arrival, we'll set off on a guided 2-hour nature walk through this acclaimed 26,000-acre reserve. Founded in 1972 as a refuge for local wildlife, Monteverde today is a protected region dedicated to scientific research and education. Stretching down both the Caribbean and Pacific slopes of the Tilarán Mountain Range, the reserve exhibits eight distinct ecological zones. This variety of habitats combined with a yearly

average rainfall of 97 inches results in a very large and diverse plant community, with more than 300 species of orchids alone. Monteverde is also home to 100 mammal species, 400 bird species, and more than 120 species of amphibians and reptiles.

Our local guide will aid us in finding and identifying a wide variety of the local species and plant life. Hummingbirds (including the Violet Sabrewing Hummingbird) are ever-present and we might glimpse some of the other notable avian residents, such as a Black Guan, a chlorophonia, or an exotic motmot. When we finish our guided tour, we'll have some free time to explore on our own.

Lunch: At a restaurant at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve.

Afternoon: We'll drive back to our hotel, where you'll have the remainder of the afternoon to do some exploring on your own like going for a nature walk or hike in search of wildlife. Or, perhaps you'll gear up and join our optional Forest Canopy tour.

Those who join the tour will meet will meet at the hotel reception before we're briefed on safety procedures. Then, we'll embark on our canopy exploration on the grounds of the hotel. Using techniques developed by cavers and climbers, we'll ascend high above the forest floor and traverse from tree to tree in the forest via a series of thrilling zip-lines—it's a great chance to enjoy an exciting adventure and another wonderful view of the treetops.

Later, gather with your fellow travelers to set off for a local bar, where we'll sample some local *guaro*. Costa Rica's "national liquor," *guaro* is a sweet alcohol made from distilled sugar cane, and we'll have a tasting of the locally made cocktails.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Relax in your room, or enjoy a drink at the hotel bar.

Day 7 Hanging Bridges tour

- Destination: Monteverde
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: El Establo Mountain Resort or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin our day with a Hanging Bridges tour. When we arrive, we'll embark on an excursion to discover the lush cloud forest from a unique vantage point. We'll follow a system of suspension bridges that spans the canopy of the Monteverde Cloud Forest, examining the flora and fauna of the rain forest from a bird's-eye view alongside our expert naturalist guide. Our guide will explain the unique characteristics of the canopy and point out animals, birds, and plants native to this treetop environment.

Lunch: Included at a local spot.

Afternoon: When we return to the hotel, you'll have the remainder of the day to explore Monteverde at your own pace. Perhaps you'll take a short nature hike.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. Perhaps you'll venture into town to find *patacones* (fried plantains with beans and cheese) and a glass of *chiliguaros*, a local drink made with Costa Rican liquor.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Recap your rainforest discoveries over a drink with fellow travelers, or head into town to experience Monteverde at night.

Day 8 Overland to Manuel Antonio National Park • Río Tárcoles mangrove and crocodile tour

- Destination: Manuel Antonio
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Karahe Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Our transfer today will take up to 4.5 hours, including stops along the way, over roads that may be bumpy, winding, or uneven at times.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We depart the cloud forest today and drive south to the abundant environs of the Pacific Coast and Quepos, home to the renowned Manuel Antonio National Park. With stops included along the way, our transfer will take up to 4.5 hours. Along the way, we'll stop for lunch and spend some time along Río Tárcoles, Costa Rica's premier wildlife areas along the Central Pacific.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: As Río Tárcoles empties out into the Pacific Ocean, its watershed gives life to dense groves of mangrove trees, and supports more than 50 species of migratory, native, and coastal birds. And it's home to an abundance of wildlife—including one of the highest populations of crocodiles in the world. We'll take a short walk to a private pier to begin our next exploration. Here, we'll board a boat and embark on a tour led by a local guide. We'll learn about the mangrove trees that have uniquely adapted to the water they grow in. The area is home to four species of mangrove trees, which are an important nesting ground for birds like the Scarlet Macaw and are located along the scenic shores. And of course, we'll also be on the lookout for crocodiles, which can grow well over ten feet in length and are often seen swimming through the river or sunbathing along the banks.

We'll disembark our boat and continue our drive to Manuel Antonio National Park. When we arrive to our hotel, we'll check in and receive our room assignments. You'll have some free time to relax after our long transfer, or perhaps you'll walk along the shores of Espadilla Beach and take in the scenic vistas.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 9 Explore Manuel Antonio National Park

- Destination: Manuel Antonio
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Karahe Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Manuel Antonio National Park. The park includes four beaches, island bird sanctuaries, and a luxuriant rain forest. And perhaps because of its small size, a morning full of wildlife sightings—including howler and Capuchin monkeys and sloths—isn't at all unusual. In particular, we'll keep an eye out for the endangered squirrel monkey, as Manuel Antonio is one of only two of its habitats in the country.

Our local guide will stop us as we walk to witness local flora and fauna. Upon arrival to one of the park's many pristine beaches, we'll have some free time to explore on our own. Perhaps you'll relax at the beach, take a swim, and enjoy the scenic views. Or, if you'd like to hike some more, you can meander through the park's many hiking trails. Then, we'll reconvene at the beach and make the 1-mile walk back to our bus.

We'll return to our hotel in time for lunch.

Lunch: At the hotel.

Afternoon: Enjoy the afternoon to relax at the hotel or explore on your own.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a drink at the bar, or retire to your room.

Day 10 Rainforest spices tour • Overland to San Gerardo de Dota

- Destination: San Gerardo de Dota
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Savegre Lodge or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll walk to the Villa Vanilla Spice Plantation, an organic spice farm. Alongside a local guide, we'll tour the plantation. The cultivation and processing of vanilla is extremely labor intensive, making it the second most expensive spice in the world.

We'll begin our tour with a stop at the plantation's post-harvest warehouse. Here, workers dry, process, and package all of their organic spices. Then, we'll take a scenic walk through their distinctive "Epiphyte Trail," which winds through the plantation and offers up-close views of their agriculture. As we'll learn each vanilla orchid is carefully fertilized by hand on this plantation. Next, we'll make our way to the outdoor patio, which offers panoramic vistas of the fish pond and the surrounding mountains. Here, we'll partake in tasting the plantation's "Flavors of the World" menu, which features treats made with vanilla, chocolate, and Ceylon cinnamon. An on-site pastry chef will prepare spice-infused drinks and treats for our small group. We'll get a true taste of the plantation's variety of spices as each drink and treat is made from scratch and uses fresh ingredients grown on the plantation.

To end your tour, perhaps you'll peruse the Spice Shoppe and purchase products grown on the farm to add to your own recipes at home.

We'll make a brief stop at the hotel to freshen up and check out. Then, we'll begin our drive to San Gerardo de Dota.

Lunch: At a local restaurant en route.

Afternoon: We'll continue our journey, driving into the mountains on the Pan-American Highway. We'll arrive in San Gerardo de Dota, the location of which—in the lush, mountain-walled valley of the Savegre River—is the reward for a long day of travel. Upon arrival to our lodge, we'll check in and you'll have a couple hours of free time. Perhaps you'll relax in your room, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommended activities.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a drink at the bar, or retire to your room.

Day 11 Explore San Gerardo de Dota • Morning search for Quetzals

- Destination: San Gerardo de Dota
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Savegre Lodge or similar

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: Today, we enjoy a free day to explore on our own. Our lodge makes it easy for us to get closer to the unique ecosystem of San Gerardo de Dota, with nearby elective activities such as birdwatching, hiking, and horseback riding. Perhaps you'll set out to spot the Resplendent Quetzal. On a birder's "life list," this legendary bird is among the most coveted species to sight. Happily for us, we're in one of the most populous quetzal nesting areas on the planet (owing in large part to its

altitude of 7,000 feet). Our Trip Experience Leader will escort us into the green valley forest in search of this elusive bird renowned for its brilliant plumage.

Perhaps because of its rarity, the Maya esteemed the quetzal as the most sacred bird in the sky. While its feathers flash iridescently in the tropical sun, the bird is predominantly green and can be hard to spot in its jungle habitat. Whether or not we're successful at spotting a quetzal today, there is plenty to observe in this high-altitude tropical environment, and sightings of a variety of interesting birds are quite likely.

Lunch: At the lodge.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy the sounds of the Costa Rican rainforest at night or enjoy a drink at the bar with fellow travelers.

Day 12 Overland to San José

- Destination: San José
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Autentico Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we depart the hotel and drive to the final destination of our journey, Costa Rica's capital, San José.

Lunch: On your own in San José—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: After lunch, our small group will get acquainted with the city on a sightseeing tour led by your Trip Experience Leader. Originally a little more than a few simple houses at a rural crossroads, San José's central location relative to the villages, farms, and plantations of the Cordillera Central ultimately earned it its place as Costa Rica's capital city in 1823. As the city attracted entrepreneurs and the intelligentsia in the mid-1800s, its leaders looked to Europe for architectural inspiration, and today it is a modern city with the largest urban population in the country.

Aboard our bus, we may see the Parque Nacional, which spans several blocks and celebrates the country's history. Two statues stand in the park: one of Costa Rican national hero Juan Santamaría and the other of the country's victory over an American named William Walker who tried to make Costa Rica a U.S. colony in the mid-1800s. We'll get glimpses of historic plazas and markets and see the city's most iconic buildings—including the *Plaza de la Cultura*, a plaza known for its street vendors and its location beside the Teatro Nacional.

Following our discoveries, we'll drive to our hotel. We'll check in when we arrive and the remainder of the afternoon is free to make our own discoveries.

Dinner: We gather to wish each other *adios* during a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: We'll walk back to our hotel. Upon arrival, you have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 13 San José • Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home, or travel to Costa Rica's northern Caribbean coast to begin your *Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast: Tortuguero National Park* optional post-trip extension.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast: Tortuguero National Park*

Day 1 Transfer to Tortuguero

Day 2 Tortuguero National Park • Explore canals by boat • Nature walk

Day 3 Tortuguero • Boat ride to Caño Blanco • Overland to San José

Day 4 San José • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Evening Nature Walk

(Day 3 \$50 per person)

On this optional tour, we'll experience another side of Costa Rica's rain forests as we set off on a nature walk under the cover of darkness. Be prepared to interact with the mysteries and curiosities of the rain forest at night as our expert guide leads us on the search for nocturnal animals like snakes, sloths, and frogs.

Forest Canopy Tour

(Day 6 \$70 per person)

On this excursion through the Monteverde Cloud Forest, we'll use techniques developed by cavers and climbers to ascend high above the forest floor and traverse from tree to tree in the forest via a series of zip-lines—it's a great chance to enjoy the thrill of the adventure and another wonderful view of the treetops.

PRE-TRIP

Costa Rica's Pacific Coast: Drake Bay & Corcovado National Park

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Roundtrip airfare between San José and Drake Bay
- » 3 nights accommodation
- » 7 meals—3 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 2 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » All transfers
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Venture into Corcovado National Park, the largest remaining primary rain forest in Mesoamerica—and one of the last refuges of the stealthy jaguar, the preening Scarlet Macaw, and the elusive tapir—to hike beachside trails, kayak along pristine coastline, or just gaze at brilliant bromeliads and countless colorful birds.

Day 1 Depart U.S. • Arrive San José, Costa Rica

- Destination: San José
- Accommodations: Autentico Hotel or similar

Afternoon/Evening: You depart from the U.S. and fly to San José, Costa Rica.

Once you arrive at the airport, an O.A.T. representative will greet you at the airport and assist you with your transfer to your hotel, where you'll join travelers who arrived early in San José before their pre-trip extension.

Upon checking in, feel free to take some time to settle in and enjoy the hotel's amenities.

Dinner: On your own.

Day 2 San José • Fly to Drake Bay • Explore Cocolito Beach

- Destination: Drake Bay
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Drake Bay Wilderness Lodge or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll drive to the airport for our flight to Drake Bay.

Drake Bay is on the Osa Peninsula, the southwestern part of Costa Rica's Pacific Coast, home to more than half of the country's plant and animal species. Once we land, we'll head toward the beach. From there, we'll get a sense of this area's isolation as we transfer to our lodgings by boat. Both embarking on this boat and disembarking at our lodge will require wading through the water.

Lunch: At the lodge.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll meet our guide in the lobby. This local expert will take us on a hike along Cocolito Beach and beachside trails known for their flowing streams and abundant wildlife, including a variety of monkeys, birds, and butterflies. After, we'll head back to the hotel, at which point you may want to rest for a few hours, enjoy the hotel amenities or have a drink at the bar.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: The rest of the evening is at leisure. Feel free to take advantage of the hotel's amenities, or perhaps take a nighttime walk along the beach.

Day 3 Drake Bay • Discover Corcovado National Park • Explore by kayak or canoe

- Destination: Drake Bay
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Drake Bay Wilderness Lodge or similar

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: Today, we set off early aboard a small boat that will take us to Corcovado National Park. Take in the sights and sounds as you ride along.

We'll then begin our nature walk through Corcovado National Park, which spans more than 108,000 acres and encompasses some 13 separate ecosystems. Our local guide will help draw our attention to unusual wildlife and vegetation. We probably won't need help spotting Scarlet Macaws, though, as Corcovado hosts the greatest concentration of them in Central America. From tiny tree frogs and Poison Arrow Frogs to big cats and crocodiles, this park is truly a naturalist's dream come true.

Following our walk through the National Park, our local expert will guide us on a hike along the Marcos Reyes Trail.

Lunch: At the lodge.

Afternoon: At the lodge, more adventure awaits, if you choose. Canoes and sea kayaks will be available for travelers who'd like to explore the Corcovado area further by water. Or, spend the rest of the day relaxing, and enjoying the cool Pacific breezes on Drake Bay.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 Drake Bay • Fly to San José • Begin main trip

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: After breakfast, we begin our transfer to San José. We'll board a boat and cruise to our bus. Then, we'll drive to the local airport.

Lunch: On your own at the airport. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Afternoon: We'll take off for San José. Upon arrival, we'll drive to our next hotel, where we'll join our fellow travelers and begin our *Costa Rica: Wildlife & Tropical Landscapes* adventure.

POST-TRIP

Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast: Tortuguero National Park

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- | | |
|--|---|
| » Roundtrip transfer between Tortuguero and San José | » 2 small group activities |
| » 3 nights accommodation | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader and local boatmen in Tortuguero |
| » 9 meals—4 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Join O.A.T. in Tortuguero National Park, Costa Rica's "Amazon"—so-called for its lush jungle canopy and the fascinating abundance of wildlife that call this protected haven home. A naturalist's nirvana, this 47,000-acre expanse stretching along the Caribbean Coast can only be explored by boat along a network of navigable waterways.

Day 1 Transfer to Tortuguero

- Destination: Tortuguero
- Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Pachira Lodge or similar

Activity Note: Our transfer today will take up to 4.5-hours, including a stop along the way to break up our drive and stretch our legs.

Morning: Concluding our *Costa Rica: Wildlife & Tropical Landscapes* adventure, we'll check out of our hotel this morning and begin our 4.5-hour drive to Caño Blanco pier. Here, we'll board a boat and cruise for a short time to Tortuguero, where we'll check into our lodge. Our lodge is located only minutes from the main entrance to Tortuguero National Park and is surrounded by winding canals and lush jungle. Literally "region of turtles," remote Tortuguero is home to 111 species of reptiles, 60 species of mammals, 309 species of birds, and 57 species of amphibians—including the endangered Green Turtle, for which it is the

western hemisphere's most important nesting site. The turtle nesting season runs from July through October. The nearby Tortuguero town is a unique Caribbean village with no roads, no sidewalks, and no cars. Brightly colored *pueblos* (small homes) are stacked along the water's edge and are a stark contrast to the jungle's verdant green.

Lunch: At our lodge.

Afternoon: You'll have free time for independent explorations. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations for activities around the lodge and in the town.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 2 Tortuguero National Park • Explore canals by boat • Nature walk

- Destination: Tortuguero
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Pachira Lodge or similar

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: We'll depart our hotel and take a short walk to the pier. Both natural and man-made canals are the primary means of transportation in Tortuguero. The Canales de Tortuguero were created in 1974 to allow inland transportation between small villages and larger towns on the coast. Now, various lagoons and meandering rivers are accessible in something other than the traditional dugout canoes of the area.

We'll embark on a cruise along this intricate tangle of freshwater canals in search of such local denizens such as caimans, iguanas, and birds. Perhaps you'll spot the famed Jesus Christ lizard, or Green Basilisk Lizard, nicknamed for its strange ability to run on water. Or, maybe you'll catch sight of a sleepy sloth reaching from branch to branch in search of a green, leafy snack. Tortuguero has no shortage of wildlife—you are bound to witness local creatures meandering the tropical canopies and winding canals. After our walk, we will return to the lodge.

Lunch: At our lodge.

Afternoon: We'll have some free time after lunch. Then, we walk along the lodge's trail to observe the region's diverse flora and fauna—perhaps glimpsing the sloths, monkeys, Green Macaws, and toucans that call this protected area home.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: You're free this evening to explore the grounds, go into the town, or relax at the lodge's bar.

Day 3 Tortuguero • Boat ride to Caño Blanco • Overland to San José

- Destination: San José
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Autentico Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's overland transfer will take about four hours, with a stop for lunch along the way.

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: After checking out of our hotel, we'll enjoy a leisure canal boat ride to Caño Blanco. As we meander the winding waters, you'll have another chance to spot the region's distinct wildlife. The natural park boasts approximately 138 mammal species, 442 bird species, and 118 reptile species roaming this tropical haven. Lush verdant branches dangle in calm canals as howler monkeys rumble through the jungle canopy. Groups of white-faced capuchin monkeys swing from tree to tree while bare-throated tiger herons lounge on knotted mangroves. When we disembark in Caño Blanco, we begin our overland transfer to San José.

Lunch: At a local restaurant along our route to San José.

Afternoon: We continue driving, arriving in Costa Rica's capital after a 3-hour bus ride. The remainder of your day is free to make discoveries in this city. Perhaps you'll visit one of San José's many fascinating museums: the Pre-Colombian Gold Museum, the Jade Museum, or the National Museum.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out *chicharron con yuca*, or pork rinds with cassava, or *gallo pinto*, Costa Rica's national

dish of rice and beans—ask your Trip Experience Leader for the best place to find these authentic meals.

Evening: You have the evening free to prepare for your return flight tomorrow morning, or perhaps grab a nightcap with your fellow travelers one last time.

Day 4 San José • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Corcovado National Park:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Tortuguero National Park:** No additional passport pages needed.

No Visas Required

Travelers with a U.S. passport do not need any visas for this adventure, including the optional trip extensions.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 6 locations in 13 days with two 1-night stays and some early mornings
- 3 overland drives of up to 4 hours, some of which are on unpaved or bumpy roads

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 6–8 hours of physical activities each day
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

ALTITUDE

- Brief travel to elevation of 12,000 feet and overnight stay at 7,200 feet

CLIMATE

- Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperatures at lower elevations, high humidity, and moderate-to-heavy rainfall.
- At higher elevations, temperatures can drop to 30°F at night

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over rural streets, unpaved roads, and rugged paths and trails
- Travel overland on 22-passenger air-conditioned minibus and 25-passenger boat
- 3 drives of up to 4 hours

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- We stay in hotels, eco-lodges, and villas

- All accommodations feature private bath and hot showers
- Some accommodations do not have air conditioning

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to "Find International Travel Information", select "Country Information", then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the "Health" section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- In Costa Rica, tap water and ice at most of our hotels is safe to drink, but check with your Trip Experience Leader.
- Bottled water is also readily available.
- Bottled drinks, bottled juices, and hot drinks that have been boiled are safe to drink.
- The most cautious approach is to carry a bottle of drinking water in your day bag at all times.

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street.
- Fruits and salads in Costa Rica are generally safe.

Electricity Supply

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is readily available on this adventure. However, power outages are more common in Costa Rica than in the United States. Travelers who are dependent on the electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power just in case.

Also, because some hotels or lodges rely on generators for electricity, the lighting may not be as bright as you are used to. And at many lodges, your room will be in a separate building from the main reception—and the pathways are not always well lit. We suggest that you bring a small flashlight.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as cash, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.
- **U.S. dollars are widely accepted in Costa Rica.** Bring small denominations (\$1, \$5, \$10, \$20) in good condition.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Costa Rica: Costa Rican colon (CRC)

How to Exchange Money

U.S. dollars in small denominations (\$1, \$5, \$10, \$20) are widely accepted in Costa Rica, so there is no need to obtain local currency before your trip. If you do need local currency, it is better to exchange money at a bank or use a local ATM, rather than change money at the airport (the airport as a poor exchange rate). Torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills may not be accepted for exchange or payment.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Costa Rica: ATM networks are common in the larger cities, somewhat available in small towns, and hard to find in rural areas or in national parks.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Costa Rica: Visa and MasterCard are the most readily accepted credit cards in Costa Rica

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1–2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** If you are dining on your own, bear in mind that it is common for restaurants in this region to add a service charge (usually of about 10%). If so, there is no need to tip.
- **Taxi drivers:** Tipping is not common practice, but many people simply let the driver keep the change by rounding up the fare to the next whole number. It is considered polite to give a \$1 or so to the driver if he/she carries a bag or parcel for you.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Please note: For your convenience, tips to O.A.T. staff can be paid in U.S. dollars or local currency. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you’ll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Some hotels in Costa Rica have WiFi service, but it may be limited in some way. For example, it might be available in the public areas only (and not in the rooms), it may be a slow connection, and it may be a service that you are charged for. In other hotels, the only Internet access is through the hotel’s computer station in the lobby or business center.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Costa Rica: +506

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by international airline. The current industry standard is 50 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Corcovado pre-trip extension: You will need an additional small bag for storage. Checked luggage is limited to 30 lbs and carry-ons are limited to 10 lbs . Size restrictions are the same as the main trip.	
Tortuguero post-trip extension: You will need a small additional bag for storage. Luggage is limited to 25 lbs plus a small carry-on (such as a purse or small backpack).	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	
For the pre- or post-trip extension: There are weight limits for your luggage on the flight to Drake Bay (pre-trip) and on the boat to Tortuguero (post-trip). These limits are smaller than the ones on your international flight. To meet the smaller limits, but still be able to bring as much as the main trip allows, you have the option of leaving excess luggage in storage at the hotel in San Jose. This option is available for one extension or both. To use this luggage storage, you'll need an extra bag, preferably one that locks.	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the *FAQ* section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

Checked Luggage

One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper.

Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

For the pre- or post-trip extension: A small, lockable bag

There are weight limits for your luggage on the flight to Drake Bay (pre-trip) and on the boat to Tortuguero (post-trip). These limits are smaller than the ones on your international flight. To meet the smaller limits, but still be able to bring as much as the main trip allows, you have the option of leaving excess luggage in storage at the hotel in San Jose. This option is available for one extension or both. To use this luggage storage, you'll need an extra bag, preferably one that locks.

Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet and walking a lot, so choose your footwear carefully. You can find especially supportive shoes designed for walking. Light hiking boots might be useful on some days. Previous travelers have also recommended bringing an extra pair of hiking shoes during the rainy season. We recommend bringing water-going footwear for

your raft ride — your choice of waterproof sandals, boating shoes, beach shoes, neoprene booties, or “aqua shoes.” If you are joining the Corcovado pre-trip extension, water shoes may also come in handy for the boat ride to the hotel.

- **Layers for the mountains:** Conditions in the mountains can be very windy and cool at certain times of the year. Windbreakers and warm clothing are recommended. San Gerardo de Dota (at an elevation of 7000 feet) can be very cold at night: temperatures can drop into the 30s °F, so please make sure to pack appropriately. This means layers of clothing including a fleece jacket or pullover.
- **Quick-dry fabrics:** You can buy shirts and pants designed for travel in a tropical climate. These clothes are made of comfortable cotton/synthetic blends, and will dry out faster. In general, avoid jeans and other heavy cotton trousers because they don’t dry as fast.
- **Laundry:** The lodges you will stay at all feature laundry facilities.

Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual. Formal clothing is not necessary.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ **Shirts:** A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts. A couple long-sleeved shirts for layering are recommended for nights in the mountains.
- ☐ **Trousers and/or jeans:** Comfortable and loose fitting is best. Avoid tight-fitting jeans.
- ☐ **Walking shorts:** Cut long for modesty
- ☐ **Shoes and socks:** A pair of sturdy walking shoes (or similar supportive sports shoes that offer good traction) and a pair of shoes that can get dirty and wet are recommended. For socks, consider bringing a couple heavy pairs for hiking and a couple pairs that can get wet.
- ☐ **Light cotton or wool sweater** as motor coach air conditioning can be cold
- ☐ **Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood or poncho**

- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear
- ☐ Swimsuit
- ☐ Gloves and a scarf: Temperatures can fluctuate in the mountains and there may be strong winds.

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

From May through November, please add:

- ☐ Rain pants: A pair of pants in a quick-drying material that can get wet or a pair of waterproof pants. Due to the tropical weather, it may rain any time of the year, but a pair of “rain pants” is especially useful in the rainy season.
- ☐ Poncho or raincoat with a hood: More useful than an umbrella on nature trails. Keep in mind that it will be warm, so look for something that adds water protection without adding bulk or warmth.
- ☐ Previous travelers have also recommended an extra pair of hiking shoes during the rainy season

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo but most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent with DEET (30%–35% strength)
- ☐ Light folding umbrella (For walking in town during a rainstorm).
- ☐ Refillable water bottle
- ☐ Travel alarm clock, or watch with alarm
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues

- ☐ Moist towelettes (not individual packets) and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ A working flashlight is a must! We suggest that you bring a small flashlight because of dim lighting (some lodges are limited by their generators) or to use on the path to your room at night (in some lodges your room will be in a separate building from main reception area).
- ☐ Folding walking stick, for uneven trails
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in most of Central America is the same as in the U.S., 110-120 volts.

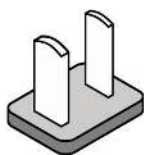
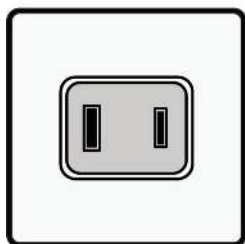
Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. By far the most common plug type in Central America is Type A, which is the same as a standard U.S. plug. Because electric plugs in this region are American-style, you will not need an adapter.

Costa Rica: Type A (same as the U.S.)

Type A



Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is readily available on this adventure. However, power outages are more common in Costa Rica than in the United States. Travelers who are dependent on the electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power just in case.

Also, because some hotels or lodges rely on generators for electricity, the lighting may not be as bright as you are used to. And at many lodges, your room will be in a separate building from the main reception—and the pathways are not always well lit. We suggest that you bring a small flashlight.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Costa Rica: As a narrow isthmus, Costa Rica is influenced by the many meteorological systems in the area and it is nearly impossible to predict the weather accurately. But generally, Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperatures, high humidity, and moderate-to-heavy rainfall. The country can be divided into four climate zones: the central valley, the high mountains, the Pacific slope, and the Caribbean slope.

- **Central valley:** This includes the area surrounding the capital, San José. This is the most moderate of Costa Rica's four zones. Days are less hot and humid, and nights are much cooler. But because the influence of the surrounding mountains, fog can gather over the highlands, causing cloudy skies or delays at San José airport.
- **High mountains:** The mountains surround the central valley, and act as a barrier between them and the coast. It can be cool and windy at higher altitudes in the mountains. Some of the mountain passes are as high as 11,000 feet, where temperatures can drop into the 30s °F at night, but usually the nighttime temperature is in the 50s.
- **Pacific slope and Caribbean slope:** Costa Rica's western Pacific slope is hot and humid with heavy rains from May through November, especially near the shore. The Caribbean slope to the east is equally hot and even wetter. Note that the humidity, more than the heat, is the biggest inconvenience in either area. Generally the humidity will start high and then decrease significantly toward the late afternoon hours, except during the rainy season, when the humidity increases throughout the day, resulting in an afternoon shower.
- **Seasons:** As a tropical country, Costa Rica does not have four seasons like North America. Instead, the country has two distinct seasons—rainy and dry (except the Caribbean slope which does not experience a dry season and experiences cold fronts throughout the year). The rainy season generally runs from May to mid or late November; the dry season is December through April. Because temperatures are fairly steady all year long, the real difference between the two is in the humidity and the amount of rain. The dry season will be less humid, with clearer skies, but the rainy season will have fewer crowds and better foliage (it is also known as the green season). During the rainy season it is very common to have clear skies or even sun in the morning followed by a brief but strong shower in the afternoon, rather than rain all day long.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use www.weather.com for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA			CARTAGO, COSTA RICA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	75 to 58	73	0.6	71 to 56	--	2.8
FEB	76 to 58	69	0.2	73 to 56	--	1.7
MAR	79 to 59	68	0.8	75 to 57	--	0.9
APR	79 to 62	70	1.8	76 to 59	--	1.6
MAY	80 to 62	78	9.0	77 to 61	--	7.3
JUN	79 to 62	83	9.5	77 to 61	--	7.5
JUL	77 to 62	82	8.3	75 to 60	--	5.7
AUG	78 to 61	81	9.5	76 to 60	--	6.4
SEP	79 to 61	84	12.0	77 to 60	--	8.3
OCT	77 to 60	85	11.8	76 to 60	--	9.3
NOV	77 to 60	79	5.7	73 to 59	--	5.9
DEC	75 to 58	76	1.6	71 to 58	--	3.6

MONTH	PUNTARENAS, COSTA RICA			PUERTO LIMON, COSTA RICA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	89 to 76	89 to 62	0.3	83 to 72	94 to 75	12.5
FEB	91 to 77	85 to 60	0.1	83 to 72	94 to 75	8.5
MAR	92 to 77	85 to 62	0.2	84 to 73	94 to 74	8.0
APR	92 to 78	85 to 66	1.3	85 to 74	94 to 73	10.8
MAY	89 to 78	92 to 74	7.8	85 to 75	94 to 76	11.3
JUN	88 to 77	95 to 77	9.5	85 to 75	95 to 78	11.3
JUL	87 to 76	95 to 77	7.2	84 to 75	96 to 79	16.2
AUG	87 to 75	96 to 78	9.6	84 to 74	95 to 79	11.7
SEP	87 to 75	96 to 79	12.2	86 to 74	95 to 76	5.6
OCT	86 to 76	96 to 79	10.0	85 to 74	95 to 78	7.2
NOV	86 to 76	95 to 76	4.7	84 to 74	95 to 79	14.7
DEC	87 to 76	93 to 70	1.3	83 to 72	95 to 78	16.1

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Costa Rican Culture

Costa Rican culture is a vibrant fusion of indigenous heritage and Spanish colonial influence with a hint of Jamaican, Chinese, and other immigrant cultures. But if you had to name the cultural trait shared by almost all *Ticos*—as they affectionately refer to themselves as—regardless of their specific ancestry, it would be *pura vida* (pure life). Costa Ricans use this term to say hello, goodbye, to toast, or even as a laid back reaction to something bad happening—similar to saying, “oh well, so it goes.”

While you may dismiss it as marketing banter (and it *is* a big marketing phrase), the *pura vida* attitude of the country can be seen through not only in the laid back nature of the people, but also through their progressive social and environmental policies.

Costa Rica may be a small country, occupying just .03% of the world's landmass, but the country holds 5% of the world's biodiversity. Situated between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, Costa Rica boasts lush mountains, active volcanoes, and verdant valleys. The country's nutrient-rich soil is ideal for cultivating cash crops like coffee, pineapples, sugar, and bananas. In fact, Costa Rica is one of the largest exporter of bananas in the world. While the agricultural industry dominates Costa Rica's economy, it also emits large amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. As a result, the nation has been implementing new agricultural practices and making strides toward becoming the first carbon-neutral country in the world by 2021.

Costa Rica's former president, Jose Figueres, sparked the country's passion for environmental change in 1948 when he eliminated the nation's military. This bold move boosted funds for environmental protection, healthcare, and education. Costa Rica provides universal healthcare to all residents and expatriates living in the country, and the healthcare system ranks higher than the United States. Funding for education has also proved beneficial. Costa Rica is one of the most literate Latin American countries in the Western Hemisphere with a 97.9% literacy rate. This sustainable way of life, and these economic and environmental efforts, are why Costa Rica was named the world's happiest country in 2016 by the New Economics Foundation.

One unshakeable tradition, deep-rooted in *Ticos*, is that they are remarkably friendly and welcoming. *Ticos* act with humility and see boasting as ill mannered. This stems from their belief in *quedar bien* (to remain well), or the desire to leave a good impression and to not appear as rude. This idea of *quedar bien* goes hand in hand with their tranquil nature. Violence of any kind is especially rare, and hostility is almost never seen.

Spanish is the official language of Costa Rica and is spoken with a distinctive accent. Costa Ricans replace the diminutive ending *-tito* with *-tico* (hence their nickname). Not only do they refer to native Costa Ricans as *tico*, they will add it to adjectives to make them sound small, affectionate, or cute. For example, in standard Spanish *un poco* means “a little,” and the diminutive is *un poquito* (a little bit), but Costa Ricans usually say *un poquitico*.

Language

You can have some great “conversations” with local people who do not speak English, even if you don’t speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Your Trip Experience Leader can help get the ball rolling.

Your attire is a key part of your non-verbal presentation. Your clothing should show a respect for local tradition. This means you should dress in a relatively modest style, to better relate to older and more traditional people, especially in villages. Avoid revealing or tight-fitting outfits.

Warning: Riptides and Strong Currents

The beaches in Costa Rica can have strong currents and riptides. Sometimes there are no lifeguards. If you decide to go into the ocean, please use caution.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Costa Rican Cuisine

Meals in Costa Rica are all about simple preparations with fresh local ingredients. Emphasis is put on the natural flavors of the meats, fruits, and vegetables rather than seasonings or sauces. As a result, Costa Rican cuisine has a reputation for straightforward cooking that is tasty but can be slightly repetitive. You can build more variety into your meals by trying different vegetables and fruits, which are often supersized compared to the ones at home because of the fertile volcanic soil.

In Costa Rica, there is a tradition of attending *ferias*, or a farmer's market, every week. The variety of vegetables, tropical fruits, and fresh meat and seafood allows Costa Ricans to draw from a staggering amount of fresh ingredients. While here, make sure to try dishes such as:

- **Gallo Pinto:** A breakfast dish made of rice and beans mixed with bell peppers, onions, and cilantro.
- **Sopa Negra:** A black bean soup.
- **Olla Decarne:** A slow-cooked beef stew with root vegetables, like carrots, taro root, and cassava. Some versions may even feature corn or plantains.
- **Sopa Mariscos:** A tomato-based soup with fresh seafood.

Some lighter snacks worth a try are:

- **Patacones:** Fried and flattened plantain chips made with green plantains that have a savory taste.
- **Tamals:** Similar to the Mexican tamale, but with garlic instead of spices.
- **Chifrijo:** A dish that combines *chicharrones* (fried pork rinds), frijole beans, and rice, and then tops the whole thing with avocado, salsa, and maybe a hint of lime juice.

If you're looking to satisfy your sweet tooth, then be sure to try:

- **Arroz con leche:** Rice pudding that is a popular dessert and is a bit creamier than its American counterpart.

- **Flan:** A custard-like base with a caramel sauce at the bottom—at local restaurants or bakeries.
- **Pipa Fria:** A tropical drink served as a chilled coconut cut open at the top to allow a straw to reach the refreshing coconut water inside.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Costa Rica

Costa Rica offers superb craft items at very good prices. Some of the most common souvenirs include wooden bowls, vases, or carvings. Unless it's marked as responsible or sustainable wood (plantation grown wood), these souvenirs may be contributing to the deforestation of Costa Rica. If the item is not marked, please consider asking about the wood's origin before purchasing.

Bargaining: In general, bargaining is not a common practice in Costa Rica, even at the stands of street vendors. Prices at shops and stores are fixed, just as they are in the U.S.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your

responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Costa Rica

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 19,730 square miles
- **Capital:** San José
- **Languages:** Spanish is the official language; English is also spoken.
- **Ethnicity:** White (including mestizo) 83.6%, mulato 6.7%, indigenous 2.4%, black 1.1%, other 6.2%
- **Location:** Costa Rica is bordered by Nicaragua, Panama, the Pacific Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea.
- **Geography:** Costa Rica has very little flat land. The plains along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts are characterized by tropical forests and beaches. The interior of the country is mountainous and precipitous.
- **Population:** 5,181,000 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 76.3%, Evangelical 13.7%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.3%, other Protestant 0.7%, other 4.8%, none 3.2%
- **Time Zone:** Costa Rica is on Central Standard Time, one hour behind U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 5am in José.

National Holidays: Costa Rica

In addition to the holidays listed below, Costa Rica celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

1/1 New Year's Day

4/11 Santamaria National Holiday

5/1 Labor Day/May Day

6/17 Father's Day

7/25 Annexation of Guanacaste

8/2 Los Angeles Virgin Day

8/15 Mother's Day

9/15 Independence Day

12/1 Army Abolition Day

12/25 Christmas Day

Costa Rica: A Brief History

Small tribes inhabited the area now known as Costa Rica as early as 8000 BC. Clay figurines and decorated vessels suggest that trade and observation of ritual began very early. When Christopher Columbus arrived in 1502, he chose the name "Costa Rica," which means "rich coast," because

he believed the land would yield vast amounts of gold. However, Spanish conquistadors soon discovered Costa Rica did not contain the mineral wealth they had hoped for. Instead, what they found were tribes of farmers and artisans. These indigenous people were exploited for their labor by the early Spanish settlers, but harsh treatment and foreign diseases wiped the majority of the native population within a century. Because Costa Rica was lacking in precious metals, as well as a supply of indigenous labor, it attracted only a few Spanish colonists. As a result, the population grew slowly and Costa Rica remained a poor colony.

In the mid-19th century Costa Rica declared independence, shortly after Guatemala did. Spain, which had shown limited interest in Costa Rica during the previous decade, did not attempt to force the colonists back to the crown.

The early years of independence were difficult for the young nation. Over the next five decades, Costa Rica experienced numerous coups and power struggles. In the 1870s, Tomas Guardia named himself ruler for life. He immediately set about building a railroad from San José to the Caribbean coast. The project bankrupted the nation, but it also laid the foundation for a thriving banana industry by establishing large plantations near the tracks.

In 1889, President Bernardo Soto opened the door to democratic reforms by sponsoring Costa Rica's first free and open elections. Soto also advocated freedom of the press and the peaceful transition of power. His reforms ushered in a period of great advancements in education and the arts.

The first three decades of the 20th century were a time of order and tranquility. Each president advanced democrat liberties and continued to expand the education system. But economic depression and uneven distribution of wealth led to a brief civil war in 1948. The government responded by expanding social welfare programs, extending suffrage rights to women, imposing a progressive income tax on the wealthy, enacting new economic reforms, and stabilizing Costa Rica's finances.

Costa Rica is by far the most democratic country in Central America. The people are literate and politically involved. There is a healthy respect for freedom of expression and a commitment on the part of both political parties to work together for the good of the nation. Most importantly, the democratic reforms of the 1940s and '50s have ushered in an age of peace and prosperity that has lasted several decades.

Costa Rica is a small country, but the people enjoy a relatively high standard of living. The country's wealth is very evenly divided, resulting in a strong middle class. Costa Rica spends a greater percentage of its national income on education than any other country in Latin America, resulting in a highly educated citizenry. In fact, more than 96% of all Costa Ricans can read and write.

Thanks in part to the establishments of the Central American common market in 1960, manufacturing has become an important part of Costa Rica's economy. The United States is Costa Rica's chief trade partner. Major exports include textiles and clothing as well as building

materials. Despite the important role of manufacturing in the economy, however, about half of Costa Rica's population makes their living from agricultural pursuits. Staple crops include sugarcane, coffee and bananas.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

General

A Brief History of Central America by Lynn V. Foster (1985, History) A good overview of the economic and cultural history of the region. An earlier book by the same name but written by Hector Perez-Brignoll is also good, but isn't as up-to-date as this edition.

Nature of the Rainforest, Costa Rica and Beyond by Adrian Forsyth (1990, Natural History) Although based in Costa Rica, biologist Forsyth used his experience to explain the basic ecology and conversation of any rainforest. Over 100 wonderful photographs complement the text.

Tropical Nature: Life and Death in the Rain Forests of Central and South America by Adrian Forsyth and Ken Miyata (1984, Natural History) An engaging overview of the ecology of a tropical rain forest as written by two biologists. First published in the 1980s, but subsequently updated and re-issued.

Costa Rica

Two Weeks in Costa Rica by Matthew Houde and Jennifer Turnbull (2012, Travel Narrative) The true-life misadventures of a young couple touring in Costa Rica, told in a breezy, upbeat style.

Happier Than a Billionaire: Quitting My Job, Moving to Costa Rica, and Living the Zero Hour Work Week by Nadine Hays Pisani (2011, Memoir) Humor mixes with struggles in this observational book about the experience of living abroad as an ex-pat in Costa Rica.

The Wildlife of Costa Rica, A Field Guide by Fiona Reid, Twan Leenders, Jim Zook, and Robert Dean (2010, Field Guide) Portable enough to take along on a walk in the forest, this latest Zona Tropical guide includes 450 of the most common animals you are likely to encounter.

The Birds of Costa Rica by Richard Garrigues and Robert Dean (2007, Field Guide) A compact yet thorough guide from Cornell University Press that includes a range maps, key information on identification and habitat, and multiple illustrations. Useful for a birding enthusiast.

Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate: Exotic and Unseen Costa Rica by Jack Ewing (2005, Natural History) Written by an American who has lived in Costa Rica for more than 30 years, this book explores how plants, animals, and people interact. Each chapter is an essay that shows a new side of the overall theme.

Suggested Films & Videos

Costa Rica

La Apuesta (1968, Pseudo-Documentary) Shot in 16mm format and narrated by a voiceover, this film follows two peasants who make a bet to see who can get from San Antonio de Escazú to Limón. At the time, there was no road to this Atlantic port, so it made crossing extremely difficult.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

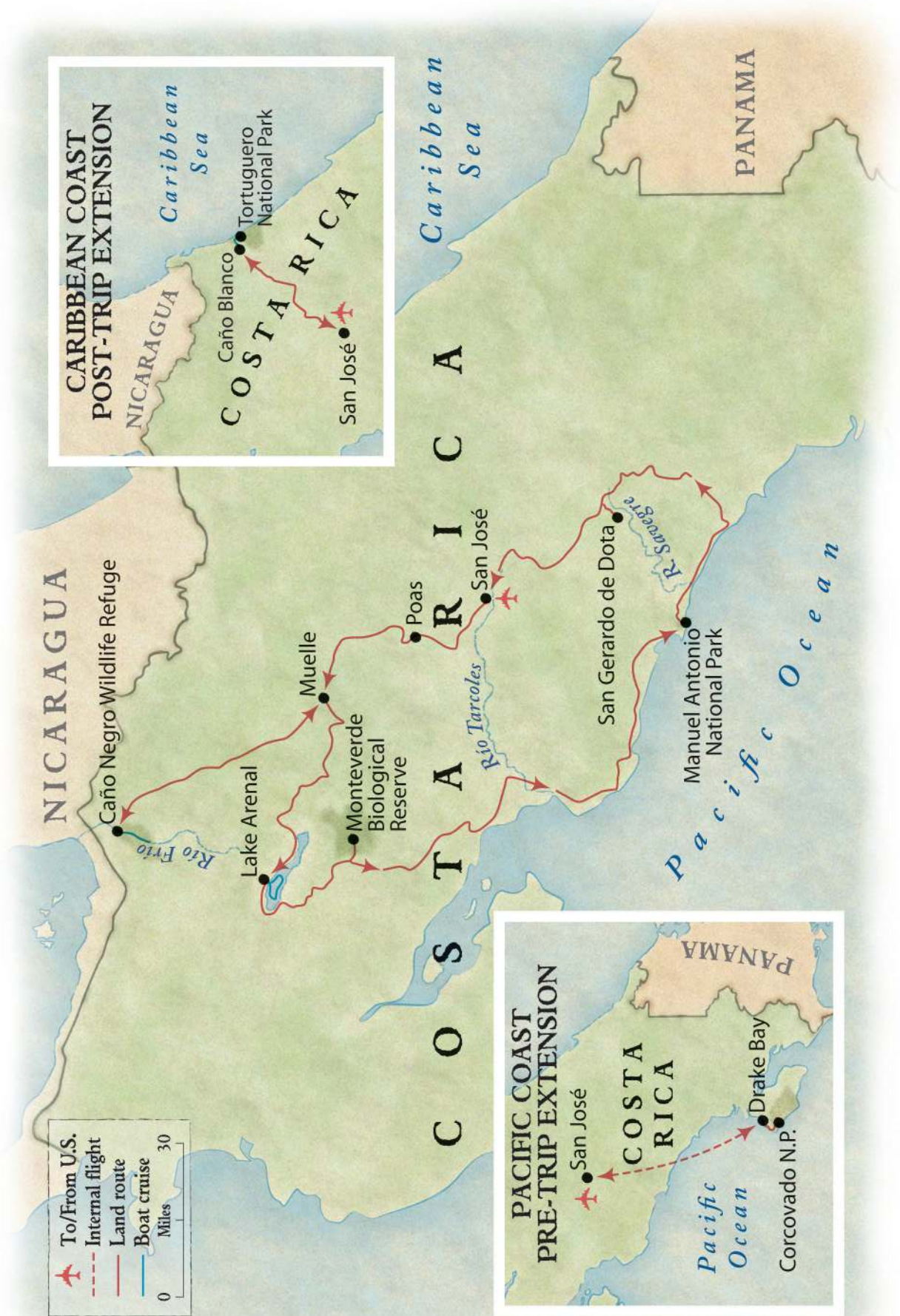
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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