

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide<sup>®</sup>



Costa Rica: Pura Vida & Rainforest Discoveries

2026

# 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.

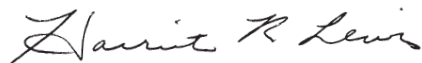
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your 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 customize 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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Three toe sloth

## Costa Rica: Pura Vida & Rainforest Discoveries

### Small Group Adventure

**Costa Rica:** San José, Sarapiquí, La Fortuna, Rincón de la Vieja, Pacific Coast

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**14 days starting from \$3,595**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/rac2026pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/rac2026pricing)

Swirling white-water rivers, hot springs, and tropical forests beckon you to explore Costa Rica. We'll journey by horseback, raft, and trail from the rapids of the Río Sarapiquí to the sun-drenched Pacific Coast. Along the way, we'll discover Costa Rica's culture—its people—as our small group dines with a local family, visits farmers and artisans, and meets children at a village school, supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 13 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
- 31 meals—13 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 9 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 14 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 adventure

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

**Costa Rica: Pura Vida & Rainforest Discoveries**





## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to San José, Costa Rica
2	San José
3-4	Sarapiquí
5-6	Chachagua
7-8	La Fortuna
9-10	Alajuela
11-12	Pacific Coast
13	San José
14	Return to U.S.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

**Pacing:** 6 locations in 14 days with one 1-night stay and some early mornings

**Physical requirements:** Spend 2 days at altitudes of 6,000-6,500 feet. Travel by horseback; river raft; tractor; and minibus over rural streets, unpaved roads, and rugged paths and trails.

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

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/rac](http://www.oattravel.com/rac)

## 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, spend **A Day in the Life** of San Francisco de Dos Ríos village for an intimate glimpse into the day-to-day lives of everyday people, including students at a local school.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Talk with local experts about **Controversial Topics** like the dangers of monoculture.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Antigua & Tikal: Guatemala's Colonial Capital and Mayan Ruins

**PRE-TRIP:** 5 nights from **\$1,495**

Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast: Tortuguero National Park

**POST-TRIP:** 3 nights from **\$895**

### 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 **Guatemala City** before your Guatemala pre-trip extension from **\$150** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **San José** before your main adventure from **\$120** per room, per night

# Costa Rica: Pura Vida & Rainforest Discoveries

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 5 nights in *Antigua & Tikal: Guatemala's Colonial Capital and Mayan Ruins*

**Day 1** Depart U.S. • Arrive Guatemala City, Guatemala

**Day 2** Travel to Antigua • Explore Antigua & Casa Santo Domingo

**Day 3** Explore Antigua • Optional Lake Atitlán & Mayan Villages tour

**Day 4** Explore Guatemala City • Fly to Petén

**Day 5** Petén • Explore Tikal

**Day 6** Fly to San José, Costa Rica • Join main trip

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

- Destination: San José
- Accommodations: Hotel Palma Real or similar

**Afternoon/Evening:** You depart the U.S. for San José, Costa Rica today. Upon arrival at the airport, an O.A.T. representative will meet you and help with the transfer to the hotel, where we'll meet our Trip Experience Leader and our fellow travelers, including those arriving from the pre-trip extension to *Antigua & Tikal: Guatemala's Colonial Capital and Mayan Ruins*. The evening is free to relax or explore on your own.

#### **Day 2** Explore San José

- Destination: San José
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Palma Real or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today begins with a Welcome Briefing with our Trip Experience Leader. Then, we'll return to San José and begin a panoramic tour of the downtown area. Our Trip Experience Leader will point out some of the landmarks of the city, such as the National Park, San José's largest park.

From here, we'll visit the National Museum in San José to explore its rich collection of pre-Columbian, colonial, and contemporary artifacts in a historic fortress, originally built in 1917.

**Lunch:** On your own in San José. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to suggest activities to suit your interests—perhaps you'll mingle with locals and sample the gourmet offerings and craft beer at *Barrio Escalante*, the city's trendy gastronomic neighborhood.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll be dropped off near the city's central park. From here, we'll visit the National Theater, considered one of the country's most impressive architectural



accomplishments. Built at a time when coffee was king, Costa Rica's opulent National Theater (*Teatro Nacional de Costa Rica*) opened in 1897 with a performance of Goethe's *Faust*. Concerts, plays, operas, and other performances are still held regularly, but the real attraction is the building's architectural splendor and lavish furnishings. Named one of "10 great ceilings around the world" by *USA Today*, the ceiling murals alone are worth a visit. You might even spot the technical errors in one celebrated mural depicting local coffee and banana crops—it was painted by an Italian master who had never even been to Costa Rica.

Then, return to the hotel.

**Dinner:** Gather for a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Consider experiencing this vibrant city by night.

### **Day 3 Explore Poás • Visit coffee *finca* • Overland to Sarapiquí**

- Destination: Sarapiquí
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: La Quinta Sarapiquí Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** The coffee farm we visit this morning is at an elevation around 4,000 feet. We recommend staying hydrated and eating light while at high altitude.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll drive to a family-owned coffee *finca*, or farm, located on the fertile slopes of Poás Volcano. After arriving, we'll enjoy a tour of the *finca*, learning how this world-renowned coffee is grown, harvested, processed, and packaged. The owner, Don Miguel or "Pancho," will also explain the benefits and challenges of competing with larger coffee plantations

as a smaller family-owned business. Our tour will conclude with a demonstration of roasting methods.

**Lunch:** At the *finca* with the owners featuring *olla de carne*, a traditional soup made with meat and vegetables.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll return to Sarapiquí. Upon arrival, we'll have some free time to settle in.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. After today's transfer, you may choose to relax at the lodge, enjoying the natural scenery around you.

### **Day 4 River rafting • Optional pineapple farm tour**

- Destination: Sarapiquí
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: La Quinta Sarapiquí Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** We'll drive to the nearby Río Sarapiquí, one of several rivers that run down from Costa Rica's mountainous central highlands, the Cordillera Central. The surrounding land varies in altitude from 112 to 9,500 feet, which is a big reason so many migratory birds congregate in the region—more than 300 species of them at last count. Here you have a choice: rafting on Class I–III rapids of the Sarapiquí, or learning about tropical flora and fauna during a walk along its banks.

Costa Rica is a destination for rafters from around the world, and we surveyed several of its rivers before selecting the Sarapiquí for the quality of its rapids, which are sporty enough to be fun, but mild enough to be enjoyed

by first-timers. Those who opt to raft will get an introduction to river safety from our professional boatmen before we board the raft and enjoy the ride. We'll spend a few hours exploring the rapids of this river.

For those who prefer not to raft, a local guide will lead a nature walk through the gardens and gallery forest that surround the Sarapiquí. This walk will provide the opportunity to spot some of the region's more elusive animal species, and to view the rich flora of this verdant environment up close. Both the river rafting and the nature walk will last a couple hours. After our excursions conclude, the two groups will come together for time to relax in the mid-day sun and compare notes about our morning's discoveries. Then, we'll return to our lodge.

**Lunch:** At the rafting company's facilities.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, you'll have the afternoon at your leisure. Perhaps you'll choose to spot indigenous wildlife at the Wildlife Center and Snake Garden.

Or, join us for an optional tour to a nearby pineapple farm. The Paradise Pineapple farm uses only organic growing methods, proving that it's possible to cultivate this valuable crop in an environmentally friendly way. We'll enjoy a tour around the property and have a chance to sample the fruit.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** You'll have the remainder of the evening free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll relax in your room, or enjoy a drink with fellow travelers at the lodge's bar.

## Day 5 Cruise the Río Frío

- Destination: La Fortuna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Magic Mountain Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** While driving to the Río Frío this morning, we'll have ample opportunity to take in the Costa Rican countryside, teeming with local farms and native teak and pineapple trees. When we arrive, we'll take a small boat and explore this complex inland waterway. With the help of our Trip Experience Leader and their expertise on the region and its wild inhabitants, we'll keep an eye out for wading birds—like northern jacanas and wood storks—as well as turtles and butterflies during our cruise. Keep your binoculars and camera ready—we might be lucky enough to spot larger animals, like the spider and howler monkeys, sloths, and caimans that live by the river.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll begin our transfer to our La Fortuna hotel.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** Your free time extends into the evening when you may continue walking around the town or relax back at the hotel.

## Day 6 A Day in the Life of San Francisco de Dos Ríos school • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: La Fortuna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Magic Mountain Hotel 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 and the first two weeks of July.



**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll drive to a local grocery store, where we'll pick up some fresh produce and other necessities for the lunch we'll later enjoy. Take this opportunity to speak with local people as they go about their shopping and observe the daily rhythm of life. After, we'll drive to San Francisco de Dos Ríos, a small village where we'll spend **A Day in the Life**. Our time here includes a visit to a local elementary school, followed by lunch in the home of a local family.

Upon arrival, we'll meet a community leader who will be our host throughout the day's activities.

The community leader will guide us to the local elementary school, where the children will warmly welcome us in colorful costumes and perform a dance traditional to the area. Being that this is a remote area, most (if not all) of the children come from families that work in the agricultural sector, many of whom never received a formal education.

During our visit, we'll spend some time with the students one-on-one, talk with their teachers, meet the principal, and learn about Costa Rica's universal educational system. Long a national priority—and a focus of government spending following the abolition of its army—Costa Rica's policy of universal education has resulted in a literacy rate of 96%. Take this opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the Costa Rican education system—perhaps you're curious to know what prompted the country to put such an emphasis on education, or maybe you'll ask if everyone agrees with the abolition of its army.

Next, we'll split into smaller even smaller groups for our short drive to the homes of some local families for a **Home-Hosted Lunch**. Upon arrival, we'll be greeted by members of our host

family, and then get to know them better while we work together to prepare our lunch with some of the ingredients we purchased earlier this morning.

**Lunch:** Sit down with a local family in their home for lunch. Costa Rican cuisine is simple and wholesome, and today's lunch will be a *casado*, a traditional Tico meal of rice and beans, salad, and a main dish prepared with vegetables, meat, or fish.

This will be a great opportunity to ask them about rural life, any customs they practice, and more.

**Afternoon:** We'll bid our generous hosts farewell and drive back to our hotel, where you'll have some free time. Perhaps you'll discover Costa Rica's native flora during a stroll around the property, or you may try to catch a glimpse of the region's eclectic wildlife, including toucans and sloths.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** Tonight is free to spend as you wish. You may ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## **Day 7 Travel to La Fortuna • Arenal Volcano National Park • Optional Forest Canopy Ride**

- Destination: La Fortuna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Magic Mountain Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's visit to Arenal Volcano may not be available (weather permitting).

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll have some free time following breakfast to enjoy our hotel's amenities. Then, we'll drive to Arenal Volcano National Park, where we'll begin a nature walk along the

Peninsula Trail and the shores of Lake Arenal. As we stroll, we'll get a closer look at Arenal Volcano—one of Costa Rica's most active volcanoes—and have an opportunity to spot the tropical wildlife. The national park is home to more than 500 species of birds, including toucans as well as monkeys and coati.

Following our discoveries, we'll drive to La Fortuna. Known as the "front yard of the Arenal Volcano," La Fortuna is a town of thermal spas and verdant hills.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in La Fortuna.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll drive to our lodgings in La Fortuna. After we check in, you'll have time to relax or explore independently.

Or, you can fly above the rain forest on an optional Forest Canopy Ride. Strapped into our harnesses and wearing thick leather gloves, we'll head to the first of ten platforms high up in the treetops, where we're sent off on the ride of our lives. Whizzing from tree to tree on the zip-line, we'll witness stunning panoramic views of the forest below.

**Dinner:** On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

**Evening:** You are free to spend the evening as you wish. You may retire early, relax with other travelers at a local bar, or go for a walk around the vicinity.

## **Day 8 La Fortuna • Cacao farm visit • Travel to Rincón de la Vieja**

- Destination: Rincón de la Vieja
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Hacienda Guachipelin or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's transfer will take about seven hours, including a 2-hour stop for a tour of a cacao farm and lunch.

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Today we'll begin our transfer to the District of Upala. We'll stop along the way at a local cacao farm and medicinal garden to learn more about one of Costa Rica's most prized agricultural products. We'll tour the grounds to learn about the production process, and see how Costa Rican chocolate is planted, harvested, and processed.

**Lunch:** At the cacao farm.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll continue our drive, arriving in Rincón de la Vieja where we'll check into our hotel and have a couple hours of free time. Our lodge is situated in the foothills of Rincón de la Vieja Volcano.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** You may spend the evening as you choose, exploring the grounds of your lodge, sipping a nightcap in the bar, or retiring early after today's transfer.

## **Day 9 Alajuela • Horseback ride**

- Destination: Rincón de la Vieja
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cañon de la Vieja Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Shortly after breakfast, enjoy a horseback ride that takes us down a countryside road. We'll saddle up and ride through sloping pastureland and along a gravel road through a countryside neighborhood. Drawing on their knowledge of the area and horseback riding, our Trip Experience Leader will guide our small group and help us appreciate the surrounding landscape.



Getting close to nature is part of the Costa Rica experience. We'll have some time to enjoy the natural wonders before us, then we'll head back to the lodge by bus for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, enjoy some free time to explore on your own. Spend your free afternoon at the lodge, where you can enjoy a nature walk on your own, or go a dip in one of the thermal pools, hot springs, or mud baths located near the lodge.

**Dinner:** At our lodge.

**Evening:** You're free to spend the evening as you wish—ask you Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## **Day 10 Discover Rincón de la Vieja National Park • Visit a local cantina**

- Destination: Rincón de la Vieja
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cañon de la Vieja Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Today, we'll discover the Rincón de la Vieja National Park, a gem of Costa Rica's natural beauty. Nestled around the imposing Rincón de la Vieja Volcano, the park boasts diverse ecosystems, from tropical rainforests to high-altitude cloud forests. As we hike its trails, we'll encounter fascinating geothermal features like steaming fumaroles and colorful hot springs, and might even spot wildlife such as howler monkeys and exotic birds. You'll get to experience the park and learn of the ancient legends surrounding its volcanic activity.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, enjoy some free time to explore on your own.

Later, we'll drive to visit a local cantina. We'll enjoy the opportunity to have authentic and unscripted people-to-people interactions as we mingle with the townsfolk who have come to relax and enjoy a drink at the end of a hard day's work. You might try drinking local specialties like a pint of Imperial, the local beer, or Cacique Guaro, a local rum-like liquor made from sugarcane.

**Dinner:** At our lodge.

**Evening:** You're free to spend the evening as you wish—ask you Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## **Day 11 Travel to Pacific Coast**

- Destination: Puntarenas
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Punta Leona or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's land transfer will take approximately 5.5 hours.

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Today, we will depart our hotel and drive for about 5 hours to the Central Pacific Coast, with one stop for lunch.

**Lunch:** On your own during a rest stop.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue the rest of our drive to our hotel. Upon arrival, we'll check in and enjoy some free time to explore.

**Dinner:** At our hotel.

**Evening:** You have the evening free to explore the grounds or relax at the hotel.

## Day 12 Outrigger canoe ride

- Destination: Puntarenas
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Punta Leona or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll visit Agujas Beach, a protected cove. Then, we'll embark on an outrigger canoe ride led by a local guide to catch the spirit of pre-Columbian Costa Rica as we paddle along the ocean, passing steep cliffs and sandy beaches (and keeping watch for wildlife). We'll disembark at Limoncito Beach, where you'll have free time. Perhaps you'll stroll along the white sand beach and enjoy the views of this Costa Rican treasure, or take a hike for coastal views.

**Lunch:** A picnic lunch will be provided at Limoncito Beach.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll return to our hotel where you're free to relax.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** Your free time will continue into the evening, when you may enjoy a drink at the beach or prepare for tomorrow's discoveries.

## Day 13 Rio Tarcoles crocodile cruise • Overland to San José

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

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll check out of our hotel and drive to the Tarcoles River, where we'll embark on a cruise through a mangrove forest

to search for the crocodiles. As we cruise, you'll discover the many ways in which mangroves contribute to their environment.

The forest is a unique ecosystem of tropical trees growing in a saltwater marsh formed by a tidal estuary, and the trees provide a home for many kinds of fish and shellfish, as well as a hunting ground for larger predators such as crocodiles. As you float past the mangrove trees' sinuous, exposed roots, your guide will help you spot and identify some of the colorful plants and animals that dwell in this wetland sanctuary, including crocodiles, monkeys, anteaters, iguanas, and coatis. This region is also home to more than 300 species of birds, including many types of egret and heron, as well as other species like the double-striped thick-knee, mangrove warbler, and American pygmy kingfisher.

When our boat cruise ends, we'll begin our drive to San José, arriving in time for lunch.

**Lunch:** Enjoy a Farewell Lunch at a local restaurant in San José.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll check in to our hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** Free to do some last-minute shopping or prepare for your flight tomorrow.

## Day 14 San José • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport in San José for our flight home. Travelers taking our optional *Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast: Tortuguero National Park* post-trip extension will fly to Tortuguero this morning.



## 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 • Visit Tortuguero town

**Day 2** Tortuguero • 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

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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.*

### Pineapple Farm

(Day 4 \$47 per person)

You’ve probably savored some of this sweet, delicious fruit from Costa Rica—now see where it’s grown. Join us on an in-depth tour of a family-owned pineapple *finca* (farm) to discover how the region’s fertile, volcanic soil nurtures these tropical plants, learn about their past and present cultivation techniques, tour the *finca*’s fields and facilities, and enjoy a taste of the “Fruit of Kings.”

### Forest Canopy Tour

(Day 7 \$80 per person)

On this excursion through the Arenal Volcano forest canopy, 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

# Antigua & Tikal: Guatemala's Colonial Capital and Mayan Ruins

## INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| » Roundtrip flight to Tikal and flight from Guatemala City to San José | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader         |
| » 5 nights accommodation   | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 9 meals—5 breakfasts, 1 lunches, 3 dinners                           | » All transfers   |
| » 4 small group activities   |   |

## PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Discover a land of mystery and majesty, home to 1,700-year-old Maya temples and the deepest lake in Central America. From the bustle of Guatemala City to the ancient marvels of Tikal, Guatemala's culture is an intriguing blend of Maya and Spanish colonial heritages.*

### Day 1 Depart U.S. • Arrive Guatemala City, Guatemala

- Destination: Guatemala City
- Accommodations: Hotel Clarion Suites or similar

**Afternoon/Evening:** Today you fly from the U.S. to Guatemala, the northernmost country in Central America. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and help with your hotel transfer.

### Day 2 Travel to Antigua • Explore Antigua & Casa Santo Domingo

- Destination: Antigua
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Villa Colonial or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll begin with a panoramic city tour of Guatemala City, the lively capital of Guatemala. We'll discover *Avenida Reforma*, "Reform Avenue," a main boulevard that was once a memorial site to commemorate the victory of the liberal reform of 1871. Unfortunately, after the severe earthquakes of 1917–1918, many homes and buildings were destroyed along the boulevard. Today, it's a restored park with several monuments and statues to honor the many Mexican and Guatemalan leaders. Next, we'll visit the Civic Center, a modern building surrounded by monuments and fountains in the largest square in Guatemala City.

Then, we'll drive to Antigua. Founded in 1542, this vibrant and charming city was the hub of Spanish power more than 200 years ago. As we begin exploring the city on a walking tour led by our Trip Experience Leader, you'll notice the Spanish influence in all that surrounds



you. Though an enormous earthquake in 1773 destroyed almost all of the architecture, many colonial structures still remain. You'll behold a mixture of vine-covered facades, tiled rooftops, and intricate detailing—all reminiscent of the Spanish style.

Then, we'll drive to the Casa Santo Domingo, a cultural complex housing two of Antigua's best museums—one featuring Spanish colonial art and another of classic Maya art. The complex is set within the ruins of the Spanish colonial monastery of Santo Domingo.

**Lunch:** On your own in Antigua's Central Park. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on the best locales. Perhaps you'll try chicken *pepián*, a spicy stew of meat, fruit, and vegetables that's often considered Guatemala's national dish.

**Afternoon:** Return to the hotel and enjoy some free time to relax and freshen up. Perhaps you'll explore Las Capuchinas ruins, or birdwatch at El Pilar Natural Reserve. Later, we'll reconvene at the hotel and drive to our dinner spot.

**Dinner:** We gather at a local restaurant for a Welcome Dinner.

**Evening:** Your evening is free to enjoy the streets of Antigua by night, use the hotel amenities, or retire early.

### **Day 3 Explore Antigua • Optional Lake Atitlán & Mayan Villages tour**

- Destination: Antigua
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Villa Colonial or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today, spend the day on your own in Antigua. Feast your eyes on the restored, as well as crumbling, monuments of its past—they all have a certain Old-World charm.

The city is primarily a study in late-Colonial Baroque-style architecture, since most of its earlier buildings were destroyed in earthquakes. By keeping everything closer to the ground and reinforcing the structures with piles of brick and mortar, 18th-century builders tried to ensure that the tremors of an earthquake would not wreak the havoc they had done in the past. As a pleasant, visual distraction, these thick, fortified walls were covered with intricate reliefs and saintly shrines.

You may choose to join an optional full-day tour to Lake Atitlán. Upon arrival in Panajachel, we'll set off on a boat tour of Lake Atitlán, the deepest lake in Central America with a depth of more than 1,000 feet. Surrounded by towering volcanoes, Lake Atitlán's natural beauty provides a distinctive backdrop for our discoveries. The cruise provides exceptional vistas of water, sky, and volcanoes.

We'll also get a sense of local life around the lake when we explore some highland villages following the boat ride. Lake Atitlán is located in the heart of the Mayan world—the Western Highlands of Central America. More than 85,000 years ago a gigantic volcanic explosion formed this lake. The results of this tumultuous period are quite striking. The lake is located over 5,000 feet above sea level, with three imposing volcanoes gracing its southern edge: San Pedro, Toliman, and Atitlán. Because of this arresting scenery, Lake Atitlán has been called “the closest thing to Eden on Earth.” We then visit the village of Santiago Atitlán, before boarding our boat and sailing to Panajachel.

**Lunch:** On your own for those who stayed in Antigua. Travelers who took the optional tour will enjoy an included lunch in a local restaurant in Panajachel, serving local dishes.

**Afternoon:** As your free time continues into the afternoon, you may wish to enjoy a good cup of coffee—and this is the place to do it, as Antigua

produces some of the best in Guatemala. Perhaps you'll spend a portion of the day writing in your journal under the shade of a tree in the central park. Maybe you'll make your way to the Colonial Museum, which houses a large collection of colonial artwork, ranging from religious paintings and statues to recreations of colonial trade work such as pottery making and blacksmithing. Or, you can search for carved jade and silver jewelry trinkets at some of the local stores. Whatever you decide to do, today is your day to mingle with the locals and get a true sense of Antigua's daily life.

For those on the optional tour, following lunch, you will enjoy some free time in Panajachel before making the drive back to the hotel. The remainder of the day is free in Antigua.

**Dinner:** On your own. You may ask your Trip Experience Leader for a recommendation of where to find *kak'ik*, a Maya turkey soup, or *tamales*.

**Evening:** Enjoy a free evening to explore or rest before tomorrow's flight.

#### **Day 4 Explore Guatemala City • Fly to Petén**

- Destination: Petén
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Villa Maya Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll enjoy a few hours of free time this morning.

**Lunch:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll drive to the airport for our flight to Petén. When we arrive, we'll check in to our hotel.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** You are free to spend the evening as you wish, walking the grounds of the hotel, enjoying a nightcap at the bar, or resting before tomorrow's discoveries.

#### **Day 5 Petén • Explore Tikal**

- Destination: Petén
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Villa Maya Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll transfer to northeast to Tikal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and perhaps the most remarkable of all the classic Maya cities. It is here that a magnificent civilization reigned from about AD 300 to 900. Nestled within Tikal National Park, the grounds are expansive and complex, and it's difficult to determine which is more impressive—the accomplishments of man or those of nature. The towering structures rise above the leafy canopy and fight for your attention with the assortment of animals and exotic birds. Within the park, it's possible to spot howler monkeys gliding through the treetops, raucous macaws and colorful toucans perching on branches, and wild turkeys wandering the forest floor.

The Tikal site comprises about six square miles with about 3,000 structures, including temples, pyramids, tombs, palaces, ball courts, and terraces. The Maya had a complex cultural caste system that relied heavily on deity worship. Often perceived as a violent sect, they sacrificed to their gods both in their temples and on the playing fields of their ball courts. Oftentimes the entire losing team was sacrificed in the name of sport.

At its peak some 1,500 years ago, Tikal was home to an estimated 100,000 Maya, and it was one of the most important urban centers of its time. Its size is intimidating, and its setting is

lush and teeming with wildlife. Standing back and just observing the immensity of it all can be quite striking.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant near Tikal.

**Afternoon:** When we return to our hotel, enjoy a couple hours of free time. There are many mysteries to ponder today, and after our day at ancient Tikal, you may enjoy a lively conversation about the famous, and infamous, Maya civilization with fellow travelers.

**Dinner:** We'll drive to a local restaurant on Flores Island.

**Evening:** Enjoy free time this evening to rest up for tomorrow, reflect on the day's discoveries with fellow travelers, or use the hotel amenities.

## **Day 6 Fly to San José, Costa Rica •**

### **Join main trip**

- Destination: San José
- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight to San José via Guatemala City. Upon arrival, you'll have the remainder of the day to explore the city before the other members of our group arrive for our *Costa Rica: Pura Vida & Rainforest Discoveries* adventure.

## **OPTIONAL TOUR**

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### **Lake Atitlán & Maya Villages**

(Day 3 \$78 per person)

On this optional full-day tour, you'll sail upon the heavenly blue waters of Lake Atitlán, the deepest lake in Central America, and a place of spiritual significance for the ancient Mayans. The mighty volcanoes that surround the lake provide some truly stunning scenery during your cruise. You'll also explore Panajachel and Santiago Atitlán, villages that line the lake's shores. Here, you'll learn about local life as you interact with the villages' residents. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.



## POST-TRIP

### Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast: Tortuguero National Park

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| » Airfare from San José to Tortuguero            | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader         |
| » 3 nights accommodation                         | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 8 meals—3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners | » All transfers   |
| » 3 small group activities                       |   |

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Extend your Costa Rica travel in Tortuguero National Park, renowned for its lush jungle canopy and the fascinating abundance of wildlife that call this protected haven home. A naturalist's nirvana, much of this 47,000-acre expanse on the Caribbean coast can only be explored by boat along a network of waterways.*

##### **Day 1 Transfer to Tortuguero • Visit Tortuguero town**

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

**Morning:** After our *Real Affordable Costa Rica* trip concludes with breakfast this morning, we'll drive to the airport for our flight to the Caribbean coast. Here, we'll board a boat and cruise to Tortuguero. En route, we'll stop to discover Tortuguero town, where we'll enjoy the Caribbean flavor of this unique village, which has 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. We'll arrive at our lodge to check in and enjoy a brief orientation walk.

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 sea turtle, for which it is the Western Hemisphere's most important nesting site. If you arrive during nesting season, which fluctuates between mid-July and mid-October, you might observe legions of sea turtles descending upon the beaches to lay their eggs and bury them in the sand.

**Lunch:** At our hotel.

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

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** You're free to spend the evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## **Day 2 Tortuguero • Explore canals by boat**

### **• Nature walk**

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

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart our hotel this morning and walk to the nearby 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. When we arrive, 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 their 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.

**Lunch:** At the hotel.

**Afternoon:** We'll have some free time after lunch. Later, we'll walk along the hotel's trails 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 hotel.

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

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

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

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

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today, we'll pack our luggage and check out of our hotel. We'll enjoy a leisurely 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 mischievously swing from tree to tree while bare-throated tiger herons stoically lounge on knotted mangroves. Upon arrival to Caño Blanco, we begin our overland transfer to San José.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant en route to San José.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue our drive and arrive in Costa Rica's capital to check in to our hotel. The remainder of your day is free to make discoveries in this city.

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

**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

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## 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](http://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 only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Guatemala:** You will need an additional passport page, for a total of 3.
- **Post-trip extension to Tortuguero National Park:** No additional pages needed.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** You will need 3 pages total.

## 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](http://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).

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### 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 14 days with one 1-night stay and some early mornings

#### 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 on uneven ground and/or steps
- 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

- 2 days at altitudes of about 6,000-6,500 feet

#### CLIMATE

- Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperatures reaching 90°F, high humidity, and moderate-to-heavy rainfall
- As a narrow isthmus, Costa Rica is influenced by many meteorological systems, making weather prediction difficult

#### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over rural streets, unpaved roads, and rugged paths and trails
- Travel via 22-passenger air-conditioned minibus, river raft, tractor, and horseback

#### ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Some of our lodgings may be quite small or family-run



- In rural areas, our lodgings may have limited services; rooms may not include TV, phone, or 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](http://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 other 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.

**But if your itinerary differs from ours, then you may need a yellow fever vaccination.** (For example, if you will be traveling independently before/after your trip with us. Or if you will be arriving from or transiting through a country other than the U.S. or Canada.) In this case, check with the CDC because you may need a yellow fever vaccination.

## Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location
- For travelers on any of the optional extensions: At time of writing, the CDC did recommend discussing anti-malaria medication with your doctor for the extensions. Anti-malarial medication can have strong side effects, so be certain to ask your doctor first. At time of writing, the CDC characterized the malaria risk on our extensions as “low”, so your doctor may not feel medication is needed.

## 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).

*At the time of writing, the State Department warned that Pseudoephedrine is banned in Guatemala since it can be used in the manufacture of methamphetamines. (Note: Pseudoephedrine is common decongestant in the U.S.; it is in brand name medications like Sudafed.)*

## 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.
- In Guatemala, tap water is not safe for drinking. We recommend you drink bottled, filtered, or boiled water only.

- You should be fine if you brush your teeth with tap water in one of our hotels or get a drink with ice in one of the restaurants we use.
- Bottled water is not included on your base trip, but your Trip Experience Leader will arrange access to a jug of filtered water where you can fill your own bottle from home. One bottle of water will be provided per day on your Guatemala pre-trip.
- You can purchase bottled water, which is readily available throughout Central America.

## 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.
- In Guatemala, be careful with uncooked fruit or salads washed in local water.
- Fruit that you peel yourself is usually safe—avoid lettuce and other unpeeled produce. (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 be considerably dimmer than what 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

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## 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](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Costa Rica:** Costa Rican colon (CRC)

**Guatemala:** Guatemalan quetzal (Q)

## 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 will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. 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. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

**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.

**Guatemala:** ATMs are available throughout large cities and small towns.



## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, 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, as not all are accepted around the world. 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

**Guatemala:** Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, though not every shop will take cards, so it is best to ask if your card is accepted before deciding on your purchase, and having a couple different cards can be useful.

## 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:** If you are taking a taxi by yourself, keep in mind that 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

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### Land Only Travelers & Customized 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 Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization 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](http://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.

- **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](http://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](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## Optional Tours: Reserve Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you reserve the following optional tours in advance. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline to do so is 45 days prior to your departure. Occasionally, space will be available for booking onsite, but this not guaranteed. Optional tours with O.A.T. can only be purchased with a credit card (Visa or MasterCard) or a debit card with credit card functionality. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "OPT Boston" (depending on your credit card company).

## **Forest Canopy Tour**

On this excursion through the Arenal Volcano forest canopy, 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.

This optional tour is offered during the main trip. The cost is \$80 per person.

## **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**

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps 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

**Guatemala:** +502

## 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 <b>50 lbs for checked luggage</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-ons</b> .
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	
<b>Guatemala pre-trip extension:</b> International flights are the same as the main trip. However, the local flight to Tikal has a small carry on restriction of <b>10lbs</b> .	
<b>Tortuguero post-trip extension:</b> You will need a small additional bag for storage. <b>Checked luggage is limited to 30 lbs plus 10 lbs for a small carry-on</b> (such as a purse or small backpack).	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<b>Luggage rules:</b> 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.	
<b>For the post-trip extension to Tortuguero:</b> There are weight limits for your luggage on the boat to Tortuguero. 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. To use this left 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.
- **A small, lockable bag for the post-trip extension:** There are weight limits for your luggage on the boat to Tortuguero. 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. To use this left 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

Most of your clothing should be lightweight and loose fitting to combat heat and humidity. Some previous travelers have suggested clothing made from cotton, linen, or another natural breathable fabric as a way to stay cool. 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.

- **Rain gear:** You'll want good, light rain gear all year round, but it is especially key from mid-May to November when it will rain almost every afternoon. Choose rain gear you are comfortable in and dry footwear, such as light hiking boots with a built-in Gore-tex liner. Previous travelers have also recommended bringing an extra pair of hiking shoes during the rainy season.
- **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. We recommend bringing water-going footwear for your raft ride—your choice of waterproof sandals, boating shoes, beach shoes, neoprene booties, strap-on sandals, or “aqua shoes.”

- **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:** Our lodges feature laundry services for a fee, so you'll be able to have laundry done during the trip.

## Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual
- You may want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants or for the Farewell Dinner, but that is completely at your discretion.

## Recommended 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. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://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 and/or quick-drying fabric. 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
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater as motor coach air conditioning can be cold
- ☐ Shoes and socks: A pair of sturdy walking shoes (or similar supportive sports shoes that offer good traction) is a must. A second pair of shoes—ones that can get dirty and wet—are also recommended, especially for the rafting excursion and muddy days. For socks, consider bringing a couple heavy pairs for hiking and a couple pairs that can get wet.
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood or poncho
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear

- ☐ Swimsuit

## 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.
- ☐ Because of the active nature of this trip, we suggest a strap for your glasses and/or sunglasses.
- ☐ 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).
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 30 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent with DEET
- ☐ Light folding umbrella (for walking in town during a rainstorm).
- ☐ Refillable water bottle
- ☐ Travel alarm clock, or watch with alarm
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues



- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Folding walking stick, for uneven trails
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

## Medicines

- ☐ 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
- ☐ Optional for travelers on any of the extensions: Anti-malarial medication—discuss with your doctor first

*At time of writing the U.S. State Department had the following warning for Guatemala: Pseudoephedrine is banned in Guatemala since it can be used in the manufacture of methamphetamines. (Note: Pseudoephedrine is common decongestant in the U.S.; it is in brand name medications like Sudafed.)*

## Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts’ generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

## 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.

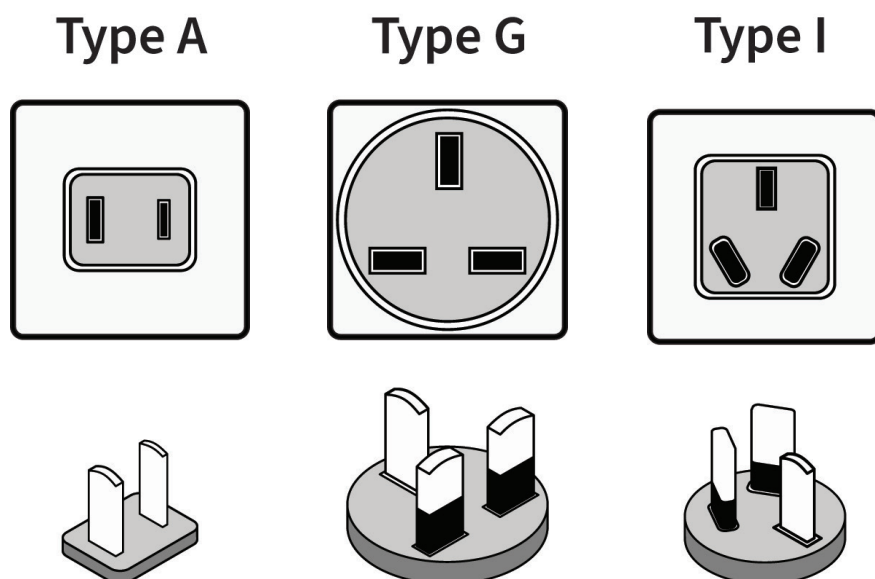
## Plugs

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. (Occasionally in Guatemala, you might find Types G and I as well. But these are not common.) Because electric plugs in this region are American-style, you will not need an adapter.

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

**Guatemala:** Type A (same as U.S.). Occasionally, you might find G or I, but they are rare.



## 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 be considerably dimmer than what 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

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**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.

**Guatemala:** Guatemala is characterized by three main climate zones—the cool highlands towards the west and south, the tropical zones along the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, and the tropical jungle area (known as the Petén) in the northern lowlands. The highlands, where we spend most of the trip, are represented by Guatemala City's temperatures, and are very pleasant. The low plains of the northern section—around Tikal and Flores—are hotter, with tropical temperatures and regular rainfall all year round. The most rainfall in the low plains occurs between May and October.

## 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](http://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	77-66	73	0.6	71 to 56	--	2.8
FEB	78-66	69	0.2	73 to 56	--	1.7
MAR	80-67	68	0.8	75 to 57	--	0.9
APR	81-68	70	1.8	76 to 59	--	1.6
MAY	79-68	78	9.0	77 to 61	--	7.3
JUN	79-68	83	9.5	77 to 61	--	7.5
JUL	78-68	82	8.3	75 to 60	--	5.7
AUG	79-67	81	9.5	76 to 60	--	6.4
SEP	78-66	84	12.0	77 to 60	--	8.3
OCT	77-66	85	11.8	76 to 60	--	9.3
NOV	77-67	79	5.7	73 to 59	--	5.9
DEC	77-66	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

MONTH	GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	72 to 55	90 to 49	4
FEB	75 to 56	90 to 45	3
MAR	77 to 58	90 to 46	4
APR	78 to 60	90 to 48	5
MAY	78 to 62	92 to 58	14
JUN	75 to 62	93 to 69	23
JUL	74 to 61	93 to 64	20
AUG	74 to 61	93 to 65	20
SEP	73 to 61	94 to 73	23
OCT	73 to 61	92 to 65	15
NOV	72 to 58	91 to 59	7
DEC	72 to 57	91 to 54	5



## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### 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 a carbon-neutral country.

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

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. 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.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; 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. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don’t leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

## Costa Rican Cuisine

Meals in Costa Rica are all about simple preparations with fresh local ingredients. Emphasis is put on the natural favors 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.

## Guatemalan Cuisine

Like most Central American countries, the cuisine of Guatemala is a fusion of Mayan, Spanish, African, and Caribbean influences. Corn, an indigenous crop common to pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican societies, is indispensable to many Guatemalan dishes. Other common ingredients of Guatemalan gastronomy are beans, plantains, rice, cocoa, tomatoes, pork, and chicken. Popular dishes include:

- **Chicken Pepian:** *The national dish of Guatemala*—chicken in spicy pumpkin and sesame sauce.
- **Kak'ik:** A turkey soup that gets its kick from coriander, achiote, and chili peppers.
- **Chiles rellenos:** Roasted peppers stuffed with rice, cheese, meat, and vegetables.
- **Tamales:** meat, corn, and veggies steamed inside a plantain leaf.
- **Tamales especiales de fiesta:** Holiday tamales which are a souped-up version of the original with more filling.
- **Spiced Mango:** Sliced green mango, seasoned with chili and lime.
- **Elotes:** Roasted ears of corn.
- **Rellenitos:** Guatemalan donuts that are made up of cooked plantains mashed with refried bean paste, sugar, and cinnamon, and then deep-fried.

## 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.

## Central America

Central America offers a variety of fine craft items at good prices. The region is known for its textiles, handicrafts, wood carvings, jewelry, jade, leather goods, ceramics and basketry. If you're in search of locally made products at a good price, browse the markets. You'll find a good mix of traditional and modern crafts at the Central Market and Craft Market in Guatemala City.

## 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](http://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

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### 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](http://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.

## Guatemala

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 42,042 sq miles
- **Capital:** Guatemala City
- **Languages:** Spanish is the official language of Guatemala; 23 Amerindian languages (including Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca) are also spoken.
- **Ethnicity:** Mestizo, European, K'iche, Kaqchikel, Mam, Q'eqchi, and indigenous.
- **Location:** Guatemala is bordered by El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Belize, the Pacific Ocean, and the Gulf of Honduras.
- **Geography:** Located in Central America between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Honduras, Guatemala is mountainous in the interior with plains along the coast.
- **Population:** 14,918,999 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic, Protestant, indigenous Mayan beliefs
- **Time Zone:** Guatemala is on Central Standard Time, one hour behind U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 5am in Guatemala City.

### National Holidays: Guatemala

In addition to the holidays listed below, Guatemala 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](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)**.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day / May Day

06/30 Army Day

09/15 Independence Day

10/12 Dia de la raza

10/20 Revolution of 1944

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/25 Christmas Day

### Guatemala: A Brief History

In the present day, the lands once occupied by the ancient Mayan civilization fall within the boundaries of Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico. Guatemala, a country of over 14 million that officially recognizes several Mayan-derived Indian languages—along with Spanish—has many direct descendants of the ancient Mayans among its people. The ancient Mayan culture is believed to have taken shape between 1500 BC and AD 100 in the Pacific

highlands of Guatemala and El Salvador. Beginning around AD 250, Mayan civilization entered what is now called its Classic Period, when the great city-states whose ruins define *La Ruta Maya* began to be built. This period lasted until about AD 900, after which many Mayan cities were abandoned. Some cities, however, particularly on Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, survived centuries longer, in a post-Classical period that extended as late as the 16th century.

At the beginning of the Classical Period, Tikal (now in Guatemala) was already well established. Early in the third century AD, a king named Yax Eb Xoc ruled Tikal and began a dynasty that lasted for the next 400 years. Yax Eb Xoc and his successors expanded their city-state by conquering surrounding kingdoms until Tikal had a population estimated at 100,000 by the middle of the sixth century. Then Tikal itself was conquered by Caracol (now in Belize), which ruled the area for over a century. A ruler named Moon Double Comb brought renewed greatness to Tikal early in the eighth century, building most of the great temples that still stand around the Great Plaza today. Tikal declined around AD 900, at the end of the Classic Period, with its population slowly dispersing and its buildings becoming overgrown by luxuriant tropical vegetation.

When the Europeans arrived in the 16th century, they encountered several remaining Mayan groups. Spanish soldiers under Pedro de Alvarado completed the conquest of Guatemala in 1548 after pitting several of these indigenous groups against each other. Once it began, Spanish rule continued here until 1821. At this point, Guatemala briefly became part of Mexico before joining a short-lived federation known as The United Provinces of Central America.

The early years of the 20th century were marked by dictatorships and foreign influence. After the dictatorship of General Jorge Ubico was overthrown in 1944, Guatemala experienced its "ten years of spring," an extended period of reform, progress, and personal freedom. In 1960, the U.S. supported government, the paramilitary, and the Cuba-backed left-wing insurgents began a brutal Guatemalan Civil War sparked by a number of social and economic factors. The low point of the 36-year internal conflict was the violent presidency of Rios Mont. During his rule thousands of unarmed civilians were killed.

In 1986, the election of President Vinicio Cerezo brought reform and a period of relative peace. In 1994, the Commission for Historical Clarification sought to end 36 years of violence and corruption; a peace accord was signed in 1996. Since the end of the civil war, a series of successful reforms and democratic elections has inspired hope for the country's recovery.

## RESOURCES

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### 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.

#### The Maya

***Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens*** by Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (2004, History/Biography) An overview of the Maya through short biographies of their rulers.

***The Maya*** by Michael D. Coe (2015, Archeology) An introduction to the extraordinarily sophisticated Mayan civilization that flourished in the jungles of Mexico and Central America 1,500 years ago and presents many details about specific sites.

***The Mosquito Coast*** by Paul Theroux (1981, Literature) A taught psychological tale of a man who abandons civilization for the wilds of Honduras.

***Time Among the Maya: Travels in Belize, Guatemala and Mexico*** by Ronald Wright (1989, Culture) Eight million people in Guatemala, Belize, and southern Mexico speak Mayan languages and maintain their resilient culture. Traveling through Central America's jungles and mountains, Wright explores ancient roots of the Maya, their recent troubles, and survival prospects.

***Maya Art and Architecture*** by Mary Ellen Miller (1999, Art) Organized thematically, this book by Yale art historian Mary Ellen Miller surveys the art and architecture throughout Mayadom. She makes use of the latest discoveries at Tikal, Copan, Palenque and other Maya sites to present the range of art from architecture, to sculpture, ceramics and murals. This book may not be easy to find in stock at your local store, but can be found online.

#### 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.

## Guatemala

***Breaking the Maya Code*** by Michael D. Coe (3rd Ed. 2012, Anthropology). The scientific detective story of how Mayan inscriptions were deciphered to reveal the fascinating history of this ancient civilization, told with eloquence by a retired professor of anthropology at Yale University.

***I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*** by Rigoberta Menchu (1983, Autobiography). Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, this Guatemalan woman speaks eloquently of her struggles against the military for a decent way of life. A compelling testimony to the power of a strong-minded, ordinary person and her love for her land.

## 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.

### Guatemala

***Ixcanul*** (2015, Drama) Directed by Jayro Bustamante, this film tells the story of María, a seventeen year old girl in an arranged marriage, who lives on the slopes of an active volcano in Guatemala.

***La Camioneta*** (2012, Documentary). Directed by Mark Kendall, this documentary features the journey of inactive American school busses that are repaired and repurposed in Guatemala by workers who are targeted by gang violence.



**Granito: How to Nail a Dictator** (2011, Documentary) Footage from a 1982 documentary about a hidden genocide against the Mayans in Guatemala helps to convict a former dictator decades later. The title refers to how a film became a *granito*—a tiny grain of sand—that helped tip the scales of justice in Guatemala.

**The Houses Are Full of Smoke** (1987, Documentary). This powerful three-part documentary exposes the history of clandestine operations and U.S interventions in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua since the 1950s.

**El Norte** (1983, Drama) This groundbreaking film is the story of a brother and sister fleeing persecution in Guatemala and traveling north (*el Norte*) through Mexico and into the United States. Filled with surreal images, it's a heartbreaking tale of hope and survival (Roger Ebert called it "a *Grapes of Wrath* for our time.")

## Useful Websites

### Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### Foreign Exchange Rates

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### ATM Locators

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### World Weather

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### Packing Tips

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### U.S. Customs & Border Protection

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### National Passport Information Center

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### Holidays Worldwide

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

## 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 or Maps.me**

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 or Bolt or Grab**

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 or Skype or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo or 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

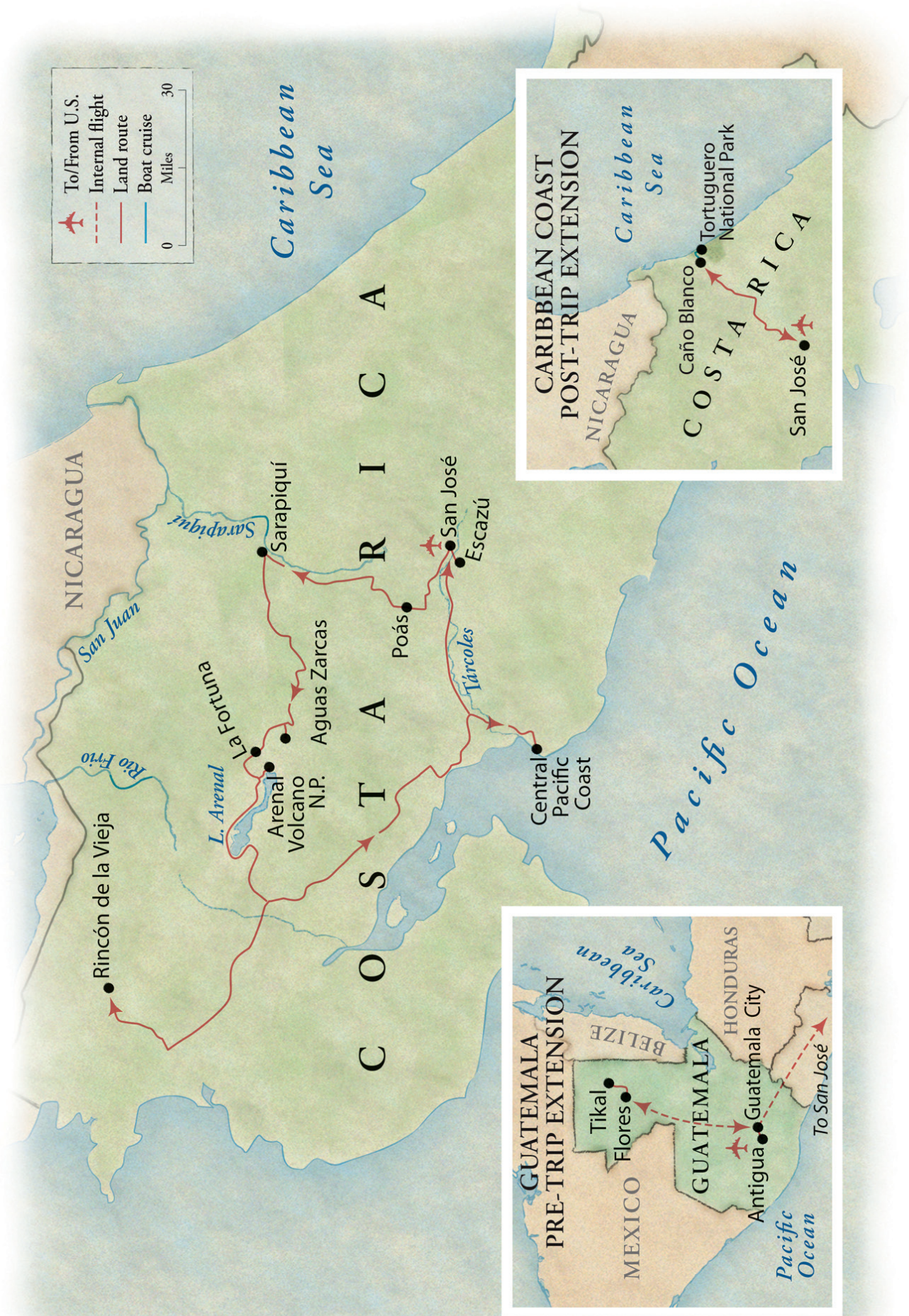
### **GeoSure**

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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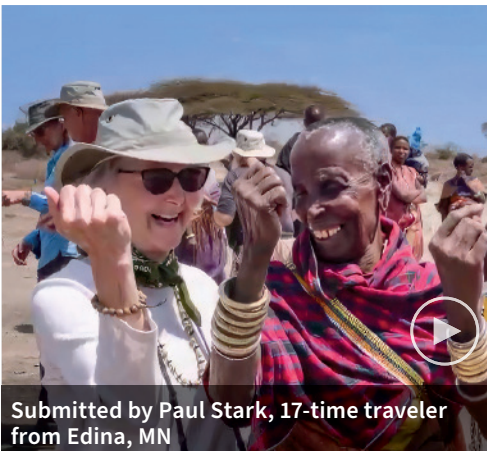
Submitted by Joy and Don Janke,  
8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,  
5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,  
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler  
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler  
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,  
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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