

Journey Idea to Costa Rica

14 Days



Toucan

Prepared for
Steppes Travel Clients



QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly UK/San Jose
Day 2	San Jose
Day 3	San Jose/Tortuguero
Day 4	Tortuguero
Day 5	Tortuguero/Arenal
Day 6	Arenal
Day 7	Arenal/Monteverde
Day 8	Monteverde
Day 9	Monteverde/Tamarindo
Days 10 - 12	Tamarindo
Day 13	Fly San Jose/UK, flying overnight
Day 14	Arrive UK

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DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1

UK/San Jose

Depart UK on the flight to San Jose, via Madrid or the USA, a journey time of approximately 15 hours.



You will be met upon arrival by the Steppes Travel representative at the airport and transferred to your hotel. All transfers are private (unless stated otherwise) and included in your trip, however it will not detail every transfer on this itinerary.

Due to its strategic location, San Jose is the ideal place to use as a base to start and end your journey in Costa Rica. Set in the middle of the Central Valley and surrounded by high mountains, the city enjoys a spring-like climate and high quality cultural events year round. Some of the city's main attractions include a visit to the Gold and Jade Museum and the National Theatre.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in San Jose on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 2

San Jose



Day at leisure to rest after your long flight or explore the city of San Jose.

Visit the nearby butterfly farm or wander downtown and explore the local markets. Visit the stunning National Theatre or just sit in a café and enjoy the delicious cakes and coffee on offer. Alternatively, we can offer a half-day excursion to Poas Volcano. The drive takes you up through the Cloud forest of the Central Valley and on up to the summit one of the few active volcanoes on the continent.



After visiting Poas your guide/driver will take you to visit La Paz Waterfall Gardens and a butterfly observatory. After lunch visit the La Paz Waterfall, and return to your hotel in the afternoon.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in San Jose on a bed & breakfast basis.

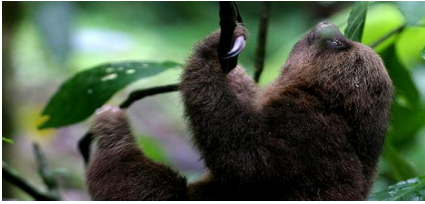
Day 3

San Jose/Tortuguero



Early morning pick up for the drive through the Braulio Carrillo National Park to the canals lining the Atlantic coast, where the 2 hour boat trip to Tortuguero begins. A typical breakfast is served on the way. Afternoon guided boat tour through the canals in search of toucans, parrots, monkeys, caimans and herons.

One of Costa Rica's most popular eco-tourism destinations; the canals and rivers of Tortuguero National Park are a study in rainforest, freshwater and marine biology. The park and



small town of Tortuguero can only be accessed by boat or small aircraft. The lodges provide comfortable accommodation, knowledgeable natural history guides, boats and family-style dining for their guests. Tortuguero is also considered one of the world's major nesting sites for the Atlantic green turtle; you can see these great creatures between July and October.

Overnight at your chosen lodge in Tortuguero on a full board basis.

Day 4

Tortuguero



Morning boat tour on the canals with an experienced guide who will help you spot the wide variety of animals and birds that make Tortuguero their home.

Afternoon walking tour along the beach to the Atlantic Green Turtle Conservation Museum and the small town of Tortuguero.

Overnight at your chosen lodge in Tortuguero on a full board basis.

Day 5

Tortuguero/Arenal

Depart the Lodge after breakfast for the 2 hour boat trip back along the canals to the dock area; here you will be able to get a drink and fruit before an hour's bus journey to Guapiles. After a hearty lunch you will be collected from the restaurant and driven to Arenal (journey of approx 2 hours).



Dramatic volcanoes, cloud forests, a lake world-famous for windsurfing and an incredibly diverse population of wildlife is what you will find in this area. The flawless silhouette of Arenal Volcano, is a sight not to be missed by any visitor to Costa Rica. However, these are not the only attractions of the area, there is bass fishing, windsurfing, hot springs, waterfalls, hiking and Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge make this an ideal stop for all travellers.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Arenal on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 6

Arenal



Half day hiking tour at Arenal.

Hiking through the rainforest at the base of Arenal volcano is one of the best ways to experience this mighty 'Mountain of fire'. Hike through the diverse flora and fauna to the famous lava wall where you will walk on lava rocks from ancient times and observe lava boulders tumbling down the flanks of Arenal. If the weather is good, you might have the chance to see the glowing cinders from the crater and hear the booms of the gas eruptions as your professional guide educates you on the activity and history of this fascinating volcano.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Arenal on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 7

Arenal/Monteverde



This morning you will be transferred by boat across Lake Arenal and then by unpaved road to Monteverde. The journey is long and bumpy, but as you wind through the mountains, climbing up to the cloud forest, the views are spectacular.

Monteverde was founded about 40 years ago by a small group of conservation-minded Quakers, who were looking for a peaceful place to live. Its Cloud Forest Reserve is one of the most outstanding wildlife sanctuaries in the tropics. This high elevation rain forest offers miles of trails with excellent opportunities for bird watching. The resplendent Quetzal is often sighted in the surrounding area (mostly January to July) plus humming birds.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Monteverde on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 8

Monteverde

Half day hike through the well-marked trails, waterfalls, rivers, and the observation area of the Monteverde Cloud Forest.



This large reserve is one of the most outstanding wildlife sanctuaries in the Americas and includes eight distinct ecological zones. It protects more than 400 species of birds and over 100 species of mammals. In addition to the spectacular Quetzal, you may see the endangered Bellbird, or Emerald Toucanet. There are also 30 species of hummingbirds.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Monteverde on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 9

Monteverde/Tamarindo



You will be collected this morning and transferred by private vehicle to Tamarindo (approx 5 hours). As you descend towards the Pacific coast you will see how the landscape changes from the lush mountains of the cloud forest to the dryer lowlands of Guanacaste Province, home to many cattle ranches.



Both nature and beach lovers will find plenty here to fill their days. Tamarindo is famous for its stunning beaches, its marine national park and wildlife refuge. This area encompasses beaches that attract one of the largest leatherback turtle populations in the world. Peak nesting seasons in the area are October through January. Due to its constant waves, it is also one of the favourite places for windsurfers.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Tamarindo area on a bed &

breakfast basis.

Days 10 to 12



Tamarindo

Days at leisure to enjoy the beautiful beaches and explore the surrounding area.

The water activities are excellent and include; snorkelling, surfing, fishing and boat trips. This is the perfect place to end your holiday, relaxing around the pool or on the beach and just topping up your tan and reading a book.

Overnight at your chosen hotel in Tamarindo area on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 13

Tamarindo/San Jose/UK

Depart Tamarindo on the local flight to San Jose.

Depart San Jose on a flight to the UK, flying overnight.

Day 14

Arrive UK

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TRIP PRICE

In each location there is a variety of different category of hotels, lodges and guest houses, therefore as a guide we have divided these into 3 categories; Traveller, Deluxe and Superior Deluxe. It is difficult to categorise each property as they vary so much therefore this is a general price guide only.

Traveller Class price from £1,895 per person + flight taxes.

Deluxe price from £2,295 per person + flight taxes.

Superior Deluxe price from £2,895 per person + flight taxes.

The rates quoted are subject to the availability of all services, currency fluctuations, written confirmation and Steppes Travels terms and conditions.

The price includes return flight from UK, internal flights, local transport, airport-hotel transfers and tours on a shared basis (or can be organised on a private basis), accommodation (twin/double with private facilities where available) and board. Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis, unless staying in a remote lodge when normally this will be on a full board basis.

The price excludes entrance charges to sites, parks and museums, extra local excursions and guided tours, international and domestic airport taxes. Travel insurance, visas, single supplements (if applicable) and items of a personal nature, such as laundry, drinks, etc.

Please note that the above is only a suggested journey, allowing in-depth visits to the highlights of the country and the chance to explore the wide range of possibilities this fascinating country has to offer. We have a separate list of escorted tours and specialise in tailoring individual itineraries to your particular interests and requirements. This journey idea serves more as a general guide on what there is to see and do, as well as a guide on price.

Why Travel with Steppes?

Steppes Travel was founded in 1989 with the objective of creating a travel company where service and knowledge are of the highest priority. We aim to design itineraries and include the highlights of any country, whilst taking travellers off the beaten track to see lesser known, interesting places not frequented by large numbers of tourists. We offer individuals the ability to travel safely in remote areas, with the knowledge that we have travelled there before.

Financial Protection

Steppes Travel is a fully bonded tour operator that complies with the Civil Aviation Authority bonding conditions of the UK. This fully guarantees your money in the unlikely event of us going out of business before you start your holiday. Our ATOL number is 6945 and we have full insurance to cover the financial failure of an airline. In addition, all accommodation-only bookings (such as hotels, lodges and boats) which are not covered by the ATOL regulations are financially protected with all payments being held in a separate trust account until the date of departure. This is in accordance with the Package Travel Regulations Act 1992.

Specialist Knowledge

We demand and employ only a very high calibre of staff. All of our specialists have a wealth of travel experience and have travelled, and continue to travel, extensively throughout their regions of specialisation. You can therefore rely on their first hand knowledge and expertise. Some have been with us for more than ten years. They will tell you about those intimate, friendly hotels and introduce you to our charismatic guides - those little extra qualities that make your holiday both unique and special.

A Tailor-made Journey

After an initial discussion with you, one of our specialists will create a unique itinerary for your

trip, designed around your own interests, preferred style of accommodation and the pace at which you like to travel. This will be fine tuned until you are completely satisfied with it. Throughout this whole process, you will be dealt with by the same specialist and you are welcome to call them at any time.

24 hour Emergency Service

We have an emergency service so that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Recognition

More than 65% of our business is achieved through recommendations, referrals and repeat bookings. This, for us, is the highest endorsement we could have. In addition, our 20 years of experience in this specialist travel sector confirms our expertise.

Please contact the Latin America team on 01285 885 333 or visit our website www.steppestravel.co.uk for further information.

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Costa Rica *Introduction*

Costa Rica is the smallest but two of the Central American republics, and is only slightly larger than Switzerland. However there are very few places in the world that can offer such an incredible diversity of scenery, climate and holiday options as Costa Rica.

The country is divided by a backbone of volcanoes and mountains, on either side you will find tropical and rain forests, cool cloud forests, dry savannahs, many streams, waterfalls and rivers, plus miles of coastline stretching along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts.

Within Costa Rica's twelve distinct ecological zones is an astonishing array of flora and fauna. Particularly magnificent are the butterflies, birds and orchids. Mammals including three-toed sloths, giant anteaters, coatimundis, peccaries and four species of monkeys are also commonly seen.

The main reason for this abundance of nature is that Costa Rica established the National Parks System in 1970 to prevent the destruction of wilderness areas and now over a quarter of its territory is protected by national parks, biological reserves and wildlife refuges. At the right times of year, you can see the Atlantic green turtle in Tortuguero National Park, the scarlet macaw in the Carara Biological Reserve and the resplendent quetzal in the Talamanca mountain range.

Within this park system are impressive volcanoes, numerous rivers, beautiful beaches and living coral reefs. Therefore you can hike around volcanoes such as Arenal, you can water raft or float gently down the Sarapiquí River, laze on the pristine beaches of Manuel Antonio and Tamarindo or snorkel and dive off the islands of Corcovado National Park.

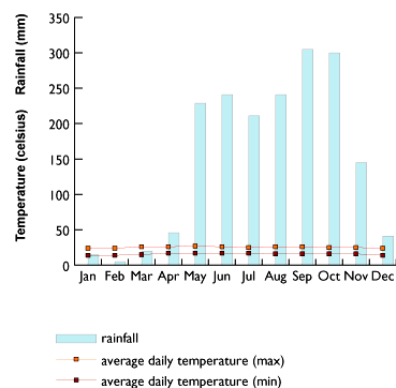
Also you will encounter a progressive society, known for its tolerance and social consciousness; one that has abolished its army and made health and education the most important priorities. Although not a wealthy nation in comparison to some other Latin American countries, Costa Rica is well developed. Roads (though not all paved), electricity and telephones reach throughout the countryside. This all makes for an easy holiday, even if you choose to be more independent and opt for a self-drive holiday.

What a beautiful country, it only occupies 0.03% of the world's surface but 5% of the planet's flora and fauna lives and grows here, a fact that fills its people with pride and with a determination to protect their natural heritage and to share it with others. Truly a rich coast, Costa Rica is well named.

Costa Rica

Fact File

Area: 51,100 sq km
Population: 3,773,057
Capital: San Jose
Currency: Colon
Exchange rate: US \$1 = 450 Colones
Country dialling code: 00 506
Official language: Spanish
Religion: Roman Catholic 76.3%, Evangelical 13.7%
Time: GMT minus 6 hours
Approximate flight time from UK: 15 hours
Electricity: 110, 60 cycles. AC (US flat-pin plugs)



Climate: A tropical country containing several distinct climatic zones. There is no winter or summer as such and most regions have a rainy season from May to November and a dry season from December to April. Temperature is more a matter of elevation than location

Special Interest: Nature tourism, surfing, golf, sport fishing, bird watching, rafting.

Traditional Buys: Ceramics, wooden and leather handicrafts.

Holidays & Festivals

01 January	New Year's Day
March/April	Easter - <i>subject to change</i>
11 April	Anniversary of the Battle of Rivas
01 May	Labour Day
25 July	Annexation of Guanacaste Province
02 August	Virgin of Los Angeles (known for her miracles)
15 August	Assumption Day & Mother's Day
15 September	Independence Day
12 October	Columbus Day
25 December	Christmas Day

Banking Hours: Monday - Friday, 0800-1100 & 1300-1700.

Visa Requirements: Citizens holding valid passports from the UK are permitted to stay in Costa Rica for 90 days without a visa

Costa Rican Consulate: 14 Lancaster Gate London W2 3LH

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7068844

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7068655

E-mail: info@embclon.demon.co.uk

British Consulate: Centro Colon y Calle 38 (Apdo 815-1007) San Jose

Telephone: 00 506 258 2025

Fax: 00 506 283 6818

Health Risks

Epidemic diseases have been all but eradicated throughout the country. However, all visitors to Costa Rica arriving from any of the following countries (Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, French Guyana) are now required to produce an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis documenting yellow fever vaccination before entry to Costa Rica will be granted. Certificates are valid 10 days after the date of vaccination.

Costa Rica

Special Interest

Nature Tourism

Discerning naturalists come to Costa Rica to enjoy the many well-kept and protected national parks and nature reserves displaying some of the extraordinary varied Costa Rican ecosystems. Some of the last patches of dry tropical forest, for instance, can be found in the Santa Rosa National Park, other parks protect the unique cloud forest and the beaches are deserted and clean. Bird watchers and butterfly lovers have long come to Costa Rica to see the 800 or so species of bird and many varieties of butterfly. Mammals too thrive in these protected areas and it is not rare to see monkeys, sloths, deer, turtles and wild cats.

Canopy Tours

There are a variety of ways to explore the canopy ecosystem in Costa Rica. Choose from tree-top trails via a network of suspension bridges that you can trek at your own pace with or without a naturalist guide or try the sky tram which ascends along a beautiful cloud forest ridge. For an exhilarating experience the zip line tour takes you soaring high through the rainforest and within feet of waterfalls and lagoons to explore the forest from unrivalled vantage points. Whichever option appeals to you most, a canopy tour is a truly invigorating way to experience close encounters with birds and mammals in their natural habitats.

Diving

Whilst not everywhere on the coast of Costa Rica is great for diving, because of the out flow of rivers into the sea clouding visibility, there are many locations worth seeing. On the Caribbean side you will see wrecks and coral reefs particularly in the south-east towards the Panamanian border and on the Pacific side you can see the larger kinds of fish.

Riversports

The rivers of Costa Rica have proved to be highly popular for canoeing, kayaking, 'floating' and white water rafting. It is not only for the thrill that they are so popular, but also for the wildlife both in and out of the water that you have the chance to see. The five most commonly run rivers are the Pacuare, Corobici, Sarapiquí, El General and the Reventazon.

Horseriding

This is an excellent way to explore the national parks and reserves and save your legs on the way up the many hills and volcanoes. Most horse treks are only for the day as many people will be unaccustomed to longer adventures, however long treks can be organised.

Surfing

Surfing is very popular on both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts offering both surf for beginners and the professionals who follow the storm surges.