



## tour dossier for:

# Costa Rica Encompassed

13 nights / 14 days • Costa Rica



**Adventure Tours**  
Varied local transport • Pleasant hotels

### The Facts

**Dossier Last Updated:** 27-03-2008

**Tour Code:** CER

**Duration** 13 nights / 14 days

**Joining City:** San José

**Departure City:** San José

**Nearest International Airport (joining / departing):** San José

This dossier is designed for this particular tour and should be read in conjunction with the country dossier(s), regional pre-departure booklet and optional excursions guides relevant to your itinerary. You will also receive a joining letter in advance of your journey with further information, while last minute updates may be posted in the Latest News section of our website. Please see [tucantravel.com](http://tucantravel.com) for details.



### What's Included

- Accommodation: 13 nights in hotels
- Meals: No meals included
- Excursions: Manuel Antonio National Park, Monteverde Cloud Forest, Tortuguero National Park
- Transport: Local public bus, minibus, boat, on foot, taxi
- Group: Average 8 - 12; max 18
- Age: Recommended 18 - 60, although we do take older passengers provided they are fit and can harmonise with the group
- Staff: Tucan tour leader, local guides

### What's Excluded

- Local Payment
- International flights & departure tax (see Costa Rica Country Dossier for current price)
- Tips on included excursions, visas, travel insurance, personal items, other tips.
- Pre & post tour accommodation
- Airport transfers
- Spending money - allow US\$30-35 per day to cover meals, snacks, drinks, limited souvenirs, laundry and any extras (see the relevant Country Dossier for advice on how to carry your funds). You are advised to obtain some local currency ( ' colones') at the airport, before making your way to the city centre. US\$ are not widely accepted in Costa Rica.

- Optional Excursions - Please see our Optional Excursions Guide (available from [www.tucantravel.com](http://www.tucantravel.com)) for a comprehensive list of optional activities and excursions available on this tour.

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## Brief Overview

The ultimate journey for nature lovers who want to experience Costa Rica's complete spectrum from outstanding national parks to active volcanoes, exceptional beaches, coral reef and a plethora of wildlife.

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## Itinerary

### Day 1 to 5

**San José - La Fortuna Santa Elena Monteverde**

The capital city of Costa Rica is nestled in a fertile valley among coffee and sugar-cane farms on a high plateau. There is not much left of the colonial era architecture due to the damage done by earthquakes but it is certainly worth seeing the National Theatre, built in 1897. Maybe you'll be lucky enough to catch a performance whilst you're here. The Gold, Jade and National Museums are also particularly recommended for a visit.

On day 2 we begin our journey travelling by bus to the small town of Fortuna. The main attraction is the nearby active Volcano Arenal, which has been constantly erupting since 1968. After settling into our hotel you'll have time for a leisurely lunch and to explore the town. An exciting optional night excursion is available where you are taken to a site near the volcano to listen to rumbles and sample the local alcoholic spirit (proceed with caution!). On a clear night you can see the amazing sight of glowing lava discharging from the volcano crater. After this you may want to visit the local hot springs for a well-earned dip. There is also free time to partake in several interesting optional excursions while in Fortuna; a visit to the waterfalls, caving, white water rafting, canoeing, kayaking, horse-riding, trekking, biking, and wild-life spotting. Then why not indulge in a massage, followed by a visit to another set of hot springs!

Our next journey takes us up into the mountains by a combination of jeep/minivan and boat. The first leg takes about 30 minutes to the Lake Arenal. After transferring onto a boat, we continue through stunning scenery for approximately an hour to the other side of the lake where we are met by our transport taking us the remaining hour and a half to the small town of Santa Elena, established by American Quakers in the 1950's. From here we visit Monteverde Cloud Forest in search of the mysterious Quetzal, a very rare and timid bird with incredibly colourful plumage. There are several paths to explore in this privately owned reserve, one of which takes you to the continental divide. On a clear day; both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans can be seen! We'll also stop at the Hummingbird Gallery (included), where these energetic birds buzz around sipping on nectar. Among other activities here, you'll have the option of flying through the trees on a series of cables strung out between giant trees, or for the not so courageous a sky walk along suspension bridges at the forest canopy level 42 metres above the ground. If even this is too much for you, you might prefer to visit one of the many nature farms in the area, and/or partake in a nature-spotting twilight walk.

### Day 6 to 8

**Quepos Manuel Antonio San José**

Descending down a steep mountain road, we will travel through very lush green countryside to the coast line and the old town of Quepos, once a very important port for the exportation of bananas. We continue our journey down another twisting road all the way to sea level in order to visit the Manuel Antonio National Park, one of the most popular parks in the country. This celebrated park is blessed with beautiful lagoons, palm fringed beaches, a vast array of animals and lush green rain forests. Many of the creatures that call Manuel Antonio home include sloths, pelicans, white-faced monkeys, anteaters and huge iguanas. It is also famous for its beaches- although almost deserted on weekdays, keep a sharp eye on your belongings, as the monkeys are seasoned thieves!

Heading across the country to the Caribbean Coast we stop en route and spend the night in San José.

## Day 9 to 14

**Tortuguero Cahuita Puerto Viejo San José**

Leaving San José for the final time we travel by bus to Tortuguero National Park, located on the Atlantic/Caribbean coast. Our journey is by bus to the port of Limón, then taxis and a motorised boat along inland jungle canals into the park. With a wide variety of wildlife along its banks, we may possibly spot monkeys, sloths, crocodiles, turtles, many different birds and the 'Jesus Lizard' so named because it can walk on water!! While in Tortuguero, with luck we will observe the Green Turtles who, between August and October, arrive at the beaches in their thousands to lay eggs in the sand. There is an interesting visitor's centre in the tiny village where you can watch videos and learn all about the turtles. During our excursions around Tortuguero we should also see the tiny but brightly coloured poison arrow frogs.

We now move on to the magical Cahuita National Park, boasting very nice beaches with off-shore coral reef. You can go for a snorkel or take a glass-bottomed boat tour among the 500 species of fish in the area. There is also an old Spanish shipwreck within easy swimming distance from the shore. Along the beach is a great place to walk. You will be taken through tropical forest hosting a wide range of flora and fauna including howler monkeys, coatis, snakes, coloured frogs and hermit crabs. The actual town of Cahuita has a very impressive selection of restaurants where you may sample some fruits of the sea, and of course listen to reggae music blaring out to the delight of the local Rastafarians.

From Cahuita you have the option of taking a short bus journey down the coast to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca. This laid-back village has both black and white sandy beaches and some of the best surf in the country. Close by is the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge (option to visit) where they are studying ways to protect the giant leatherback turtle and the Talamanca Indian Reserve. We return to San José for the final night of this fantastic tour. Perhaps a group dinner and night on the town is in order!

Our tour ends on day 14 in San José

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**Important note:** the itinerary listed above is to be used as a guide only. Occasionally we may need to update this document and it may be different to the information printed in our current brochure. Tour leaders may need to make adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances during the tour. It is very important that you visit our website and review a copy of this dossier as close as possible to your departure date in case of changes that may affect your plans. Any last minute changes may also be posted in the Latest News section of our website.

## Pre and Post Tour Accommodation

Very little time is spent in the starting and finishing cities and you will need to allow a few days at the beginning or end of your tour if you want to explore them further. For details of pre and post tour accommodation bookings (which should be made at the time of your tour booking) please refer to our current brochure.

## About Adventure Tours

Adventure Tours travel by public transport wherever possible and so have a high degree of interaction with the local people. This hands-on style means that you will need to travel light (see below for details). Tucan Travel Adventure Tours will bring you into contact with cultures and experiences that contrast dramatically with those at home and therefore a sense of humour and patience is essential!

Don't forget that Tucan Travel also offers four other tour styles: Discovery Tours (Central & South America) where we travel by private and comfortable, custom-built vehicle staying in hotels; Overland Expeditions (in South America only), which usually have a high percentage of camping, travel by overland truck and suit travellers who love the great outdoors; Budget Expeditions (great value tours for 18 to 35s) are flexible tours offering travellers optimum control over their budgets, travelling in our custom-built expedition vehicles, plus coaches and local transport, staying in pleasant hotels, hostels and campsites; Independent Travel offers personalised itineraries, stopovers and language schools with your choice of accommodation and flexible travel days.

## Local Payment

The cost of all Tucan Travel tours includes a compulsory Local Payment which is in addition to the Tour Price paid to your booking agent. The Local Payment MUST be paid to your Tour Leader in full \$USD cash at the pre-departure meeting on the first day of your tour. The Local Payment is administered by Tour Leaders and no refunds can be made for any unused services or if you decide to leave the tour early.

## **Pre Departure Meeting**

The address of your joining hotel can be found on your joining letter and tour voucher. On arrival you should look for a Tucan Travel information sheet on the hotel notice board where you will find details of the pre-departure meeting. The tour leader will normally hold the pre-departure meeting on the afternoon of Day 1 (assuming that all clients have arrived by then). Your tour leader will give a briefing about the tour, outline the plan for the next few days, answer any questions and collect your Local Payment in full in US\$ cash. Then there may be an option for everyone to go out for dinner and drinks to start to get to know one another. Please note that you will need to bring the following important items to the pre departure meeting:

1. Passport (including any necessary visas) original document and a photocopy.
2. Vaccination certificates (e.g. Yellow Fever, if required)
3. Travel voucher
4. Travel insurance policy
5. Local Payment

## **Tour Personnel**

Adventure Tours use a variety of different styles of leadership in order to maximise your enjoyment and experiences. On this tour you will have a combination of Tucan tour leader and local guides. The Tucan Tour leader accompanies your tour and local guides will lead your included and optional excursions.

## **Degree of Difficulty / Fitness Required**

Adventure Tours suit people who are fit and active. Although no experience is required there are many walks between bus/train terminals and hotels/homestays and travellers must be able to carry their own luggage over various terrains as well as lift up luggage onto the tops of buses!

On these particular tours there will be some up-hill walking which will not be difficult for those who are reasonably fit.

## **Pre-Departure Information**

Once you have booked the tour (paid your deposit), your booking agent will provide you with a detailed pre-departure booklet with in-depth information to help you prepare. If you do not receive your pre-departure information shortly after booking your tour please consult your travel agent. After you have paid for your tour in full you will also receive from your travel agent: a local map & joining letter for your arrival city, your tour voucher and transfer voucher (if applicable).

## **Country Dossiers**

This Tour Dossier is designed to be read in conjunction with our Costa Rica Country Dossier which you can download from our website or obtain from your booking agent. The Country Dossiers contain essential information about visas, arrival transfers, spending money & costs, taxes & tips, climate, local food etc.

## **What you need to bring**

A full list of suggested equipment can be found in the pre-departure booklet.

A towel is suggested as you can quite often use hotel towels but it is not guaranteed, you will also need one for all the beach stops. A sarong is also highly recommended as it can also be used in place of a towel. Snorkelling equipment may be useful, but not necessary, as you can easily hire it locally. If you want to save space you could just bring some swimming goggles - still great for spotting fish! You may wish to bring some kind of waterproof protection cover for your pack, as luggage tends to get thrown around a lot on transport and it may get dirty and sometimes wet.

Some kind of rain jacket will be necessary, but don't bring anything too heavy (can be hot). Ponchos can be bought cheaply on arrival and are more practical than most rain jackets. Teva/Reef style sandals are a must have for nearly all of the excursions (something with good grip that you don't mind getting wet). Hiking boots are not essential but may be useful for the volcano and rainforest treks.

In Costa Rica you can store excess luggage in San José as we will be returning to the same hotel. Remember, the lighter your luggage, the better time you will have!

On Adventure Tours it is very important that you do not bring too much luggage as you will find it extremely difficult to get on/off buses and trains etc and there is a fair amount of walking to/from hotels. You are also likely to encounter many cobbled streets and dirt roads so luggage on wheels is totally unsuitable. As this trip starts and finishes at the same hotel in Havana, you may wish to leave behind some luggage if you have been travelling before or plan to travel on after this tour. The lighter your luggage the better time you will have!

You must be prepared to carry your own bags at all times. We therefore strongly urge you to limit your luggage to a maximum of 10-14 kgs. Please see the relevant Country Dossier and Pre Departure Information booklet for further information about luggage requirements and what to pack.

## Transfers

We do not offer airport transfers in San due to the ease, availability and cheapness of local transport. Please refer to your tour Joining Letter for approximate prices and detailed guidelines.

## Accommodation

All hotels are chosen for their central locality, security, friendliness, cleanliness and ambiance. Although sometimes simple, you will find clean comfortable rooms with en-suite facilities (occasionally bathrooms may be shared but this is rare), and often a bar and restaurant are attached or close by. All rooms will be allocated on a share basis, usually in twins or triples (depending on the male/female ratios).

## Transport

On Adventure Tours our goal is to offer you as much variety as possible in terms of transport so that you'll have good opportunities to meet the local people. On this tour we will be using privately hired buses, mini buses, taxis, boats (life jackets provided) and one flight. There will also be some walking with your luggage between some transport and hotels. Optional excursions may use other forms of transport, for example boats, horses, trains and mountain bikes.

## Meals

Meals, snacks and drinks are not included on this tour and are at your own expense. Your tour leader will be able to advise the best places to eat. As much of our accommodation on this tour is in home-stays in Cuba, many of our hosts will offer delicious meals, typical of the country (at your own expense), so you might prefer this to eating out! Please see the relevant Country Dossier for more information about the local food.

## Tour Highlights

- **San José** - Costa Rica's cultural capital with many museums, theatres, restaurants, and cafes.
- **Arenal Volcano** We hope to view red hot lava flowing from this highly active volcano!
- **Monteverde Cloud Forest** - A cloud forest reserve with hundreds of species of birds and butterflies hidden amidst the moss-covered vines. Option to take a Sky Walk or Trek where you can walk or fly through the canopy on zip lines!
- **Manuel Antonio National Park** - White sandy beaches, rainforest trails, and an array of wildlife.
- **Tortuguero National Park** - A unique maze of canals skirting the coast, twisting and turning its way through dense jungle.
- **Cahuita** Area of natural beauty with breathtaking forests, reefs and waterfalls.
- **Puerto Viejo de Talamanca** - a laid-back Caribbean town with unspoiled beaches stretching for miles, and waves perfect for surfing.

## Day to Day Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive San José (Costa Rica)
Day 2	La Fortuna
Day 3	La Fortuna
Day 4	Santa Elena
Day 5	Monteverde
Day 6	Quepos
Day 7	Manuel Antonio National Park
Day 8	San José
Day 9	Tortuguero National Park
Day 10	Tortuguero National Park
Day 11	Cahuita
Day 12	Cahuita, Puerto Viejo de Talamanca
Day 13	San José
Day 14	Depart San José

Please note the day to day itinerary above is given as a GUIDELINE ONLY.

## Responsible Travel Tips

At Tucan Travel we are serious about our responsibility to care for the environment and people that we visit. Here are a few tips to help you to enjoy your tour while minimising your impact and enhancing your travelling experience. Learn more about our responsible travel policy at [www.tucantravel.com](http://www.tucantravel.com).

1. Carbon offset your Tucan Travel tour and flights. Check out our website for details about how you can go about this [www.tucantravel.com](http://www.tucantravel.com).
2. Bring your own metal water bottle. Fill up at restaurants or treat your own water on tour instead of buying lots of plastic bottles. Bear in mind that there may not be recycling facilities available at some destinations.

3. Cut out plastic – remove and recycle the packaging of new travel gear before you pack, and bring a light cotton or string bag for your shopping, so you can politely refuse plastic bags at shops and markets.
4. Bring a stack of pens and pencils and hand these out to children rather than offering sweets. Your alternative gifts will still be popular and the parents will thank you for saving their children's teeth – access to dental services may not be readily available there.
5. Learn a bit of the local language before you travel. Being able to say even a few words like hello, please and thank you will help you to connect with people in a positive way and really enhance your personal experience. Bring a phrase book on tour and keep practising to improve your confidence. You will also find some good language tips in the country dossier(s).

### **Feedback**

At the end of your tour we would greatly appreciate it if you could take the time to complete a questionnaire about your experiences. The tour leader will give you a paper copy and an electronic version can be found on our website. We take feedback very seriously as it allows us to maintain and improve the very high standards we expect from our road crew, local operators, hoteliers, transportation and office staff, among others. We also use this information to improve our itineraries and optional excursions on offer. Thank you in advance for your help with this.

### **Subscribe to our e-newsletter**

If you're keen to keep up-to-date with the latest news, special offers, events and competitions, why not sign up to our newsletter? It's easy - just enter your details in the 'subscribe' section on our home page, and that's it. Don't worry, we won't spam you, or pass on your details to any third parties, and it's easy to unsubscribe if you decide later on that it's not for you.

### **Join our online communities**

Make friends with fellow passengers in the Tucan Travel forums, and ask questions about any tour you like – we've got the answers! See Share your tour photos and videos on Youtube and Flickr, and keep in touch with group members on Facebook, Bebo and Myspace. There are many Tucan Travel communities out there waiting to welcome you, just a few clicks away.

### **Write a travel diary and get published on our website!**

Share your experiences of life on tour and you may be rewarded! Get in touch with us for details through [www.tucantravel.com](http://www.tucantravel.com).

### **We want your photos!**

We've taken you to some of the most amazing places on earth – why not share that with the world? Send us high resolution colour photos of your adventures, and you could be published on our website or our brochure. Contact us through [www.tucantravel.com](http://www.tucantravel.com).