



## tour dossier for:

# Nature Trails

8 nights / 9 days • Costa Rica



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

### The Facts

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

**Tour Code:** NCR

**Duration** 8 nights / 9 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: 8 nights in hotels
- Meals: No meals included
- Excursions: Manuel Antonio National Park, Monteverde Cloud Forest
- 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 Travel tour leader

### What's Excluded

- Local Payment
- International flights & departure tax
- 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
- 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

This interesting journey through captivating Costa Rica offers the traveller the chance to experience beautiful national parks, golden beaches and the active Arenal Volcano.

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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 travel 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 9

**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.

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 finishes on day 9 in San José

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**Important note:** The itinerary listed above is to be used as a guide only and our tour leaders may need to make adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances. The tour leader will also try to be in the best place for local holidays and festivals etc. We endeavour to incorporate any permanent changes into our Tour Dossiers and, as such, the itinerary may vary slightly from the one printed in the brochure. To make sure you have the most up to date copy please download the very latest version from our website just before travelling.

## 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 Travels's 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 offer two other tour styles: Discovery Tours where we travel by private and comfortable custom built vehicle and 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.

## Local Payment

The cost of all Tucan Travel tours includes a compulsory 'Local Payment' which is in addition to the price you pay to your travel agent. The Local Payment MUST be paid to your Tour leader in full in US\$ cash at the pre-departure meeting on the first day of your tour. The local payment is administered by our 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 will usually be the 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 maximize your enjoyment and experiences. On this tour you will have a combination of Tucan Travel tour leader, Tucan Travel guides, local guides and local reps. The Tucan Travel Tour leader accompanies your tour and Tucan Travel guides will escort you at times when your tour leader may not be available. Local guides will lead your included and optional excursions, and local reps are local businesspeople also responsible for occasional meet and greet and transfers.

## Degree of Difficulty/Fitness

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

There are some optional excursions available, such as climbing volcanoes, white water rafting, canyoning and mountain-bike riding which can be demanding. The maximum altitude this tour reaches is about 1,600 metres (unless you decide to go on an optional volcano climb) which is not considered high in terms of altitude sickness.

## Pre-Departure Information

Once you have booked the tour (paid your deposit), your travel 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 see below).

## 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 optional as you can quite often use hotel towels, however if you prefer your own bring it along. Alternatively, a sarong is highly recommended as it can also be used in place of a towel. Snorkelling equipment may be useful, but not essential, 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 public 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.

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.

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!

You must be prepared to carry your own bags at all times and we therefore strongly urge you to limit your luggage to a maximum of 10-14kgs.

## Transfers

In San José we do not offer arrival and departure transfer services. However, it is very easy to arrange your own transfers (either by taxi or bus) once in San José. Please see your tour Joining Letter for full details and prices.

## 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 while meeting the local people. On this trip we will be using local public buses, mini buses, taxis and boats. There will also be some walking with your luggage between bus terminals and hotels. Optional excursions may use other forms of transport, for example boats, horses 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. 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.

## 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 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).