

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Highlights of Costa Rica
9 days

Costa Rica - Trip code BCC



Highlights of Costa Rica

Head up to the impressive crater at Poas Volcano, and go white-water rafting in the shadow of Arenal's smoking peak. Explore the wildlife and jungle trails of the Monteverde Cloudforest, including searching for the mysterious quetzal. Relax on the white-sand beaches of Manuel Antonio National Park, after spotting sloths and howler monkeys within the canopy. Costa Rica's rich and varied ecosystems do not disappoint.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Nature and wildlife** - The opportunity to see sloths, monkeys and brightly coloured frogs, together with some of Costa Rica's spectacular birdlife
- ★ **Monteverde** - Search for the beautiful quetzal in this remarkable cloudforest reserve
- ★ **Volcanoes** - Admire the classic cone-shape of Arenal and the vastness of Poas
- ★ **Manuel Antonio** - Share the stunning white-sand beaches with sun-bathing iguanas and Capuchin monkeys

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in San Jose

After arriving in San Jose, we will check-in to our conveniently-located hotel. San Jose lies in a fertile valley at an altitude of 1150 metres. Coffee and sugar cane are big industries here and coffee is even planted between new buildings and along the roadside on the outskirts of the city.



Accommodation: Villa Tournon (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available




Meals Provided: None


DAY 2 - Visit the Doka Coffee Estate, drive to Arenal


Normally this day would be planned to visit the volcanic crater of Poas. However, due to recent activity at the Poas volcano, and the closure of the National Park, you'll now visit Doka Coffee Estate - the largest coffee plantation in Costa Rica. Here you'll be given a guided tour around the coffee plantation, which will include coffee tasting and a visit to the roasting room. After your visit to the Doka Coffee Estate, you'll continue onto the town of Sarchi, well known throughout Costa Rica for its beautiful and intricate arts and crafts. It's famous for producing colourful and decorative oxcarts, which are a huge part of Costa Rican culture today, and even considered one of Costa Rica's national symbols. You'll have time to explore the artisan town, visit the largest and oldest oxcart factory, and see Sarchi's church unusually painted pink and blue. Following your visit to Sarchi, you'll then visit the neighbour town of Grecia. A small farming town with beautiful mountain landscapes and rich sceneries. Grecia is an important agricultural hub of the country, producing sugar cane, organic coffee and pineapples. The town is home to Cathedral de le Mercedes, a gothic style church made of metal pieces. We will then continue onto Arenal for the next two nights in La Fortuna. Should the Poas Volcano stabilize and the Poas National Park reopens, then we'll revert back to our original plans on this day to visit Poas Volcano.



Accommodation: San Bosco Inn (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Swimming pool available

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 3 - Free day: options include rafting

Today has been left free to explore the area as you choose. There are local treks to waterfalls and along lava trails whilst those keen to relax can enjoy spa treatments with volcanic mud, for the more active you may wish to go White Water rafting. Your Tour Leader will be able to provide information on all the options.



Accommodation: San Bosco Inn (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Swimming pool available

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 4 - Walk in Arenal; drive to Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve

This morning we will explore the Arenal Volcano National Park, home to one of the most majestic volcanoes in Costa Rica. We will take a walk on the flanks of the volcano where your leader will point out interesting flora and fauna and provide more information about the science and history of the volcano. We will walk to a viewpoint for a closer view of the volcano. Following this we will travel around Arenal Lake up into the cloud forest region of Monteverde - one of the most well-known places in Costa Rica to see wildlife. The last part of our journey is on bumpy roads, but we are rewarded with a two-night stay here to enjoy all that this area has to offer. Perched on the Continental Divide between the Pacific and the Caribbean, it is thought that there has been indigenous habitation in Monteverde since 3000 BC. However, the turning point in its recent history came in 1950, when a group of pacifist Quakers from Alabama moved here to avoid subscription in the Korean War. They sought a lifestyle in a country in which they could embrace their peaceful beliefs and continue to cultivate their dairy farms. These families went on to establish the community of Monteverde and some of its famed cloudforest reserves. Monteverde is regarded as offering some of the best canopy experiences in the world. This afternoon, you may choose to 'fly' through the dramatic scenery on a zipwire, or take a more sedate walk through the canopy on treetop walkways. This evening, there is the opportunity to go on a guided night walk in search of nocturnal species, such as pacas and tarantulas.



Accommodation: Hotel Heliconia (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Nature walk in the cloudforest searching for wildlife

The famous, but now very rare, resplendent quetzal is fairly commonly seen in this area, one of the last remaining places in Central America where its habitat has been preserved. Sacred to the ancient Maya and Aztec peoples, it is considered one of the most beautiful birds in the world and the best time to see it is during its breeding months of March and April. This morning, we will have a guided tour of the Monteverde Cloudforest, walking the paths that wind their way through gigantic ferns, giant ferns and giant trees dripping with lichen and moss. The jungle floor is often littered with blossoms that fall from the high canopy providing a carpet of colour amidst the endless green. The rest of the day has been left free to enjoy one or several of the many optional activities available in the area. You may choose to visit the local butterfly or orchid garden. Alternatively, you may choose to enjoy a trek in one of the other reserves. Your Tour Leader will be able to offer advice on the options available.



Accommodation: Hotel Heliconia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Drive south to Manuel Antonio National Park

Leaving the cloudforest behind us this morning, we descend to the Pacific Coast, enjoying staggering views over the Gulf and Peninsula of Nicoya. Heading south, we cross the Rio Tarcoles Bridge from which huge crocodiles are regularly seen. We then pause at Carara Biological Reserve, famed for the scarlet macaws and abundant birdlife which populate this transitional forest. Finally, we continue along the Pacific Coast to Manuel Antonio National Park, where we will spend the next two nights.



Accommodation: Cabina Espadilla Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Explore Manuel Antonio's wildlife and beaches

This morning, we explore the Manuel Antonio National Park, famed for its beautiful beaches and rich wildlife. During our time in the park, we are likely to see white-faced capuchin monkeys, coatimundi (part of the racoon family) and the tiny squirrel monkeys. This is also one of the best places in Costa Rica to see sloths. The majority of a sloth's diet comes from buds and leaves. As leaves provide little energy, sloths move only when necessary and even then very slowly so they are easy to spot. The remainder of the day can be spent relaxing on the white sandy beaches, enjoying a swim in the warm azure waters. The sunsets from this coast are spectacular and have to be seen to be believed.



Accommodation: Cabina Espadilla Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Travel back to Costa Rica's capital, San Jose

After a morning relaxing on the beach, we leave the Pacific Ocean at about midday. Our journey back to Costa Rica's capital will take about four hours.



Accommodation: Villa Tournon (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Tour ends San Jose

Tour Ends San Jose

 Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

We have created this tour for travellers who want to discover all of the major Costa Rican highlights but are short of time. Including the wildlife of Manuel Antonio, the cloudforest at Monteverde and Arenal's conical volcano, this trip will not disappoint.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 8



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

8 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Holidays to Costa Rica

Climate

Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page. Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperature humidity and rainfall. The average temperature is 21°C in the highlands and variable in the lowlands. The rainy season is from May to November and the summer from December to April, but it does still tend to rain, usually in short bursts. Bear in mind that Costa Rica has 12 microclimates and weather can vary significantly in one day.

Time difference to GMT

-6

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Christian, Roman Catholic

Language

Spanish

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these trip notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Arenal - Hot springs US\$ 37 (US\$ 57 with dinner) plus transport; Waterfall walk US\$ 15; Half day Safari float US\$ 60; White Water Rafting grade II or III US\$73-89; Chocolate tour ents. US\$25 with transport US\$33; Danaus Eco Centre ents. US\$20 with transport US\$67; Farm to Table cooking class US\$67 Monteverde - Canopy bridges US\$ 45; Night walk in Reserve US\$ 48; Canopy zip wires US\$ 58-81; Canopy and Bridges US\$ 75-120; Butterfly garden ents US\$15 with transport US\$ 45 ; Orchid gardens ents US\$ 10; Manuel Antonio - Boat trip around NP US\$ 79; visit to the Kids Saving the Rainforest project US\$45

Clothing

Lightweight clothing is essential in midsummer though a warmer jumper is advisable for cooler evenings in the highlands (Monteverde can be very cool at night). A good waterproof is essential, and you could consider waterproof trousers. The jungle lowlands are hot and muggy, and it can rain at any time of year. Long trousers and long-sleeved shirts are recommended on jungle walks. Please be aware there is a reasonably priced / fast laundry in La Fortuna / Arenal.

Footwear

Lightweight trail/walking boots for jungle walks, comfortable shoes/trainers and sandals. In the rainy season waterproof boots are recommended.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daysack. Remember, you are expected to carry your own baggage - don't overload yourself.

Equipment

We recommend a sunhat, sunscreen, a small umbrella, a torch, insect repellent, a travel adaptor and a water bottle. Binoculars are essential for bird and animal spotting, and, for those interested, we also recommend bringing snorkelling equipment for your time at Manuel Antonio National Park.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 30 for group tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Holidays to Costa Rica

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£13

Dinner price

£13

Beer price

£1.8

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Costa Rican Colon.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange. USD can be used in some places in Costa Rica

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Costa Rica: Citizens from the UK, US, Canada and most EU countries do not require a visa for a stay up to 90 days. Citizen of Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland do not require a visa for stays up to 30 days. USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit) For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html> Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp> Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcours. See www.travcours.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcours. The Team at Travcours will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

Holidays to Costa Rica

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

