

EXPLORE!

Book with confidence



Family Costa Rica Highlights

COSTA RICA - TRIP CODE FCB

FAMILY

Why book this trip?

A perfect school holiday getaway for travellers in search of Costa Rica's natural beauty. With a quarter of Costa Rica designated as protected land and with over 5% of the world's biodiversity, Costa Rica is a truly wildlife-lover's paradise; with enough to keep thrill seekers more than entertained. If you're looking for a family holiday to Costa Rica that connects your kids to the natural world and ignites their thirst for adventure then this trip is for you.

- **Monteverde** - Explore the cloud forest trails, a biodiverse paradise for nature enthusiasts
- **Adventure** - Whitewater raft on the Balsa River
- **Manuel Antonio** - Share the stunning white-sand beaches of this national park with sun-bathing iguana and capuchin monkey

**INCLUDED MEALS**

Breakfast: 8
Lunch: 2

**TRIP STAFF**

Explore Tour
Leader(s)
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)
Naturalist(s)

**TRANSPORT**

Bus
Boat

**ACCOMMODATION**

2 nights
comfortable
bungalow
1 nights
comfortable hotel
5 nights premium
hotel

**TRIP PACE:**

Moderate

**GROUP SIZE:**

10 - 16

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in San Jose

Arrive in San Jose. The Costa Rican cosmopolitan capital 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.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 7pm or the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in San Jose at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into San Jose's Juan Santamaria International Airport (airport code SJO) which is 18km, around thirty minutes from the hotel. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose head out to explore the city which is easy to navigate with a grid pattern of avenues and streets with a good choice of local eateries, which you may choose to sample this evening. The National museum (Museo Nacional De Costa Rica) is also well worth a visit.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel Aurola Holiday Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Visit the active Poas Volcano, drive to Arenal.

Located in the central valley at an altitude of 1150 metres, head north, out of San Jose to Poas National Park, where the smoke from one of Costa Rica's most active volcanos periodically rises from the tropical rainforest. Poas has erupted 40 times since 1828, most recently in April 2017. At almost kilometre in diameter and 314 metres deep the main crater is one of the largest in the world.

We head out on a well graded footpath to the viewing point offering views directly into the crater. Due to recent volcanic activity, time at the crater viewpoint is restricted to 20 minutes. If activity increases again the authorities may choose to close the park in which case we will visit a nearby coffee estate instead.

Our next stop is the provincial town of Sarchi, well known throughout Costa Rica for its intricate arts and crafts. The town is best known for producing decorative oxcarts, one of Costa Rica's national symbols. We meet Don William, a local artist, who will teach us how to paint a traditional oxcart with some of the patterns and designs familiar to the area.

Continuing to Arenal (approximately 2.5 hours), we will catch our first sight of the famous Arenal Volcano. This classic cone, which rises to 1633 metres, is covered by a tangled mass of vegetation on one side, while the other is starkly barren.

Our accommodation for the next two nights is on the outskirts of La Fortuna. Each family is accommodated in individual bungalows positioned in a large tropical garden. Open up the wooden shutters each morning onto an extensive outdoor deck area overlooking the jungle and listen to the sounds of the tropical birds all around you. The lodge also features a freeform outdoor pool.

This evening, we can make the most of the local geothermal activity by enjoying an optional bathe in nearby hot springs.



ACCOMMODATION:
Chachagua Rainforest Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Bungalow



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Whitewater rafting in La Fortuna.

After breakfast drive from our lodge to the Balsa River. On arrival at our rafting base meet our river guides, get kitted out with equipment and have a full safety briefing, before heading out onto the river. No previous experience is necessary and full instruction will be given. There is a minimum age of 8. Children under 8 will not be able to take part in this mornings activity and will need to be accompanied by an adult, catching up with the group at San Carlos Bridge.

Our professional guides aid us in navigating two hours of exhilarating grade two and three rapids. In between each rapid the action quiets down and there is ample time to sit back and take in the scenery with dense rainforests on both banks of the river. Spot wildlife including sloth, monkey and may species of tropical bird such as toucan.

Our rafting trip ends at the San Carlos Bridge, where we can time to enjoy a dip in river and a drink before heading back to our lodge. The afternoon is free to relax by the pool.



ACCOMMODATION:

Chachagua Rainforest Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Bungalow



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Explore the Arenal Volcano National Park; drive to Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve.

Today after a leisurely start, we travel around Arenal Lake into the cloud forest region of Monteverde - one of the most well-known places in Costa Rica to see wildlife.

Lunch today is an interactive affair. Stopping on the shore of Lake Arenal we visit El Establo, a family run restaurant and ranch. After a short tour of the ranch, tuck in to a typical Costa Rican dish called "Casado" comprising of rice, beans, beef or chicken or fish and plantain.

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. 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 cloud forest reserves.

After checking into our hotel Monteverde head out on a guided night walk in search of nocturnal species.



ACCOMMODATION:

El Establo Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

DAY 5 - Nature walk in the cloudforest in search of exotic birds, sloth and other wildlife.

This morning we will have a guided tour of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, walking the paths that wind their way through gigantic ferns, ducking underneath the lichen and moss that hangs from the giant trees. The jungle floor is littered with blossoms that fall from the high canopy providing a carpet of colour amidst the endless green.

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.

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 or use the hotels indoor swimming pool, two Jacuzzis or pool table. Your Tour Leader will be able to offer advice on the options available.



ACCOMMODATION:

El Establo Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Head to the Pacific Ocean. Boat trip on the Guacalillo backwaters. Continue to Manuel Antonio National Park.

Leaving the cloudforest behind us, descend to the Pacific Coast, enjoying staggering views over the Gulf and Peninsula of Nicoya.

Heading south, cross the Rio Tarcoles Bridge from which huge crocodiles are regularly seen. We stop at

the Guacalillo estuary and board a boat, setting off for a 2½ hour scenic river adventure through dense mangrove forests.

The mangrove is a great habitat for many endemic birds like the cuckoo, Mangrove Hummingbirds, Vireo, Panama Flycatcher and many herons and egrets. This particular mangrove forest is one of the most important in the mid-Pacific Coast for the conservation of the Scarlet Macaw. Though this endangered bird species spends most of the day in the forest, they rest in the mangroves.

Look out for some 250 species of birds, crocodiles, mammals and insects. Osprey, gull, cormorant, pelican and frigate birds are some of the most common species in the backwater delta. Spot the large colonies of crocodiles! Some of these reptiles are easily 10-feet long.

After lunch, included on this day, we continue along the Pacific Coast to Manuel Antonio National Park, where we will spend the next three nights.



ACCOMMODATION:
Shana Hotel and Spa (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

DAY 7 - Explore Manuel Antonio's wildlife and beaches.

After a hearty breakfast of 'Gallo Pinto' (a mix of rice and beans, eggs, cheese and plantain) travel into the heart of the Manuel Antonio National Park, famed for its beautiful beaches and rich wildlife.

During the day the park we are likely to see white-faced capuchin monkey, coatimundi (part of the racoon family) and the tiny squirrel monkey. This is also one of the best places in Costa Rica to see sloth. 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 waters. Our hotel is located two minutes walk from the beach. The sunsets from the coast, which are best viewed from the roof top pool are spectacular and have to be seen to be believed.



ACCOMMODATION:
Shana Hotel and Spa (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Free day in Manuel Antonio

Enjoy a full day to explore the area and relax on the fine beaches of the Pacific Ocean.

There are also lots of other activities on offer if beach time isn't for you, including rafting or snorkelling trips or take to the sea and explore the inlets on a kayak. Your local leader can give you a run down on the options available, details of which can be found in the budgeting section.



ACCOMMODATION:

Shana Hotel and Spa (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Trip ends in Manuel Antonio

Departing Manuel Antonio this morning we drive 160km back to San Jose's Juan Santamaria International Airport (airport code SJO), where we will arrive at about midday and this is where our trip ends. The earliest your flight can depart is 1pm.

For those on later flights a private transfer can be arranged at additional cost later in the day. It's also possible to extend your stay in Manuel Antonio.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

Costa Rica

Climate

Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. 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	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Christian, Roman Catholic	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 tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

A selection of optional activities are listed below to help you budget for your Family adventure. Whilst the basic tour price you pay before you travel includes a great selection of highlights, we have also built in free time to allow you the flexibility to choose from a carefully selected range of additional excursions and activities or take time to relax, the choice is yours.

At certain destinations along the way there may be several options to choose from and it may not be possible to fit all the activities in; your Explore Leader will be able to give advice on which are the most suitable for your family.

Day 2: Arenal - Hot springs US\$ 42 (US\$ 72 with dinner) plus transport per person

Day 5: Monteverde - Hanging bridges and zip line canopy US\$ 91 per person; Canopy bridge tour US\$ 46 per person; Zip wire adventure US\$56 Take an open air gondola to the top of the hill, admiring the best views of the surrounding area. From the hill station take the exhilarating zipline course down the mountain.

Day 8: Manuel Antonio - Damas Island Kayak US\$ 73 per person; Horseback riding and waterfall US\$ 73 per person; Mangrove boat tour US\$ 72 per person; Canopy Zip Wire Tour US\$ 88 per person; Butterfly & Reptiles combo US\$ 29 per person

Clothing

Lightweight clothing is essential in midsummer however a warmer jumper is advisable for cooler evenings in the highlands (especially in Monteverde). A good waterproof is essential, and you should 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.

Footwear

Lightweight trail/walking boots for jungle walks, comfortable shoes/trainers and sandals. Waterproof footwear is recommended.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

Please allow yourself one main piece of luggage and a day sack. Remember, you are expected to carry your own baggage, so don't overload yourself, a soft wheeled bag may be easier to manage than a suitcase.

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

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

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. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 25, approx. 17'500 Costa Rican Colons per family member.

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£13	£13	£3	£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Costa Rican Colon (CRC)

Recommended Currency For Exchange

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. USD are accepted in some shops / restaurants. We recommend you take some emergency cash in USD. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they may not be accepted. Please check on line for up to date information

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in Colones. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

Transport, Accommodation & Meals**Transport Information**

Bus, Boat

Accommodation notes

Accommodation and service levels in Costa Rica are in general of good standard as they are used to catering for the North American Market. Almost every hotel we stay in has air conditioning or fans. We try to avoid the use of the large chain hotels and try to use a mix of jungle and mountain lodges as well as small family run hotels. They all have private facilities. Several of our Costa Rica hotels are found on the outskirts of town - these have better facilities and larger grounds and we will have transport on hand to take us into town for evenings.

Family swimming

All the hotels on the trip have swimming pools. In addition we spend three days on the Pacific Ocean with ample opportunity to swim off the beach.

Essential Information**Government Travel Safety 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 citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport 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 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 be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.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 Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

Ability to swim

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip, in particular the whitewater rafting. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Family information

Triple Rooms: This trip allows the option for triple rooms to be included within the booking on all night stops within the holiday. Triple rooms in Costa Rica will contain two double beds. If you would like this option, a discount may be applicable on the cost of the trip - please ask our Sales team for further information.

Average Age: As a guide we have identified the actual average age of the children who have travelled on this trip over the the last 5 years, to help you decide whether it's the right one for your family. The projected average age on this trip is 12 years old.

Minimum age: This trip is suitable for children of all ages from 7 upwards. The minimim age for white water rafting in La Fortuna is 8 years old. On certain trips there may be some flexibility to accept children from the age of 5 if travelling with older siblings, please speak to our reservations team for details.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

We have created this tour for travellers who want to discover all of the major Costa Rican highlights in just nine days, ideal for a half term break or a shorter holiday. Focusing on three of Costa Rica's main highlights, Manuel Antonio on the Pacific Ocean, the cloudforest at Monteverde and Arenal's conical volcano. You'll come back rejuvenated, refreshed and with a camera full of amazing memories.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**