



A Quick Guide to

Costa Rica

WHAT
TO DO

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LANGUAGE
AND
WEATHER

OUTWARD BOUND COSTA RICA

A Quick Guide to Costa Rica

QUICK GUIDE TO COSTA RICAN HISTORY

The nation of Costa Rica has 4.8 million residents. Making up eight tribes, the Cabécar Indians are the largest indigenous group. Although Costa Rica has been colonized, its history is far more peaceful than any one of its Central American neighbors.



In 1821, Costa Rica got independence from Spain, after various Hispanic colonies went to war against the Spanish empire. Costa Rica wasn't involved in the war, due notably to its low population. Costa Rica was neutral in the war but still benefited from their victory.

Costa Rica has been inhabited for the past 11,000 years. It is estimated that the indigenous population was relatively low prior to European settlement. Costa Rica served as a bridge between the North and South of Central America and was an important part of the main trade route.

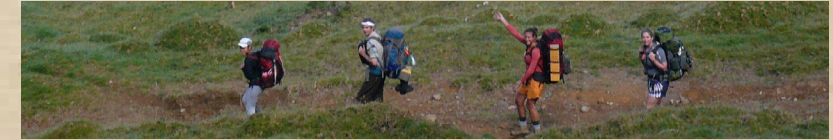
A decade later, coffee crops were introduced to Costa Rica, allowing the country to quickly become the wealthiest in Central America thanks to the unrivaled quality of its coffee production. Today, tourism has replaced the coffee industry as the country's prime source of income.

In 1502, Christopher Columbus landed on the shores of Costa Rica on his fourth and final voyage to find a sea passage to Asia. His crew named the land Costa Rica, or Rich Coast, because the native people welcomed them with presents made of gold. However, very little gold or other valuable resources were actually discovered in Costa Rica, so it remained the least inhabited colony during the Spanish conquest of Latin America.

In 1947, the country experienced one of its major conflicts: a civil war, that lasted six weeks and took 2,000 lives. Today, the country has no military, and invests its resources mainly in health and education instead. The literacy rate is over 95 percent, one of the highest in all Latin America. Costa Rica is also a leader in terms of environmental policies, and the government has announced plans for the country to be carbon neutral by 2021.

QUICK GUIDE TO THINGS TO DO IN COSTA RICA

With natural beauty, a unique flora and wildlife and plenty of options for adventure activities, there is a lot to do in Costa Rica! It would take a lifetime to discover all Costa Rica has to offer, but here's the top five things you can do on your visit.



Hike Through the Rainforest

Two-thirds of all living animal and plant species on Earth are found in Costa Rica's lush rainforests. The best way to experience the country's incredible ecosystems is to hike with a guide so that you can learn about the biodiversity as well as the environmental measures Costa Rica takes to protect its nature.



Raft Whitewater Rapids

Costa Rica is a world-class destination for whitewater rafting, consistently ranking in the top ten places to battle rapids. The diverse Pacuare, Pejibaje, Sarapiquí and General rivers, offer action-packed adventures in stunning natural landscapes including valleys and rainforest.



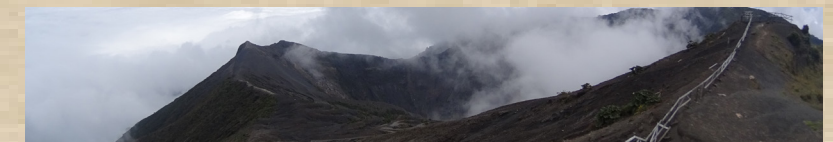
Learn to Surf

Surfing is the way of life for Costa Ricans who grow up near the ocean. With warm-water breaks year round, Costa Rica is an ideal place to learn to surf or take your skills to the next level.



Zip Line Through the Trees

Another great way to experience the rainforests of Costa Rica is to fly through them on a canopy zip line tour. Zip lining allows you to discover the biodiversity from a bird's-eye-view while whooshing at thrilling speeds of up to 25 miles per hour.



Summit a Volcano

There are six active volcanoes in Costa Rica. Irazú Volcano, located in the Central Highlands, is the country's highest volcano and contains several active craters. Visitors to Irazú Volcano National Park can hike to the craters and explore the landscape up-close.

Good news - you can do all these activities on a course with Outward Bound Costa Rica! Visit www.OutwardBoundCostaRica.org for information on our summer, semester and group programs.

QUICK GUIDE TO SPANISH PHRASES

While many Costa Ricans, especially those in major tourist destinations, speak English, knowing a little Spanish can go a long way. Not only will using Spanish help you communicate more efficiently, it will also show Costa Ricans that you respect their language and culture. Of course, learning a language is a process that takes many years, but here is a quick guide to top phrases you should know before you visit Costa Rica:

Buenos días – Good morning

Buenas tardes – Good afternoon

Buenas noches – Good evening

Sí – Yes

No – No

Permiso – Excuse me (when trying to pass someone)

Disculpe – Excuse me (when getting someone's attention)

Me gustaría – I would like

Hasta luego – Good bye

¿Dónde está el baño? – Where is the bathroom?

Pura vida – Literally “pure life,” used as a greeting by Costa Ricans

Tico – Slang term for a Costa Rican, used enduringly by Costa Ricans



QUICK GUIDE TO WEATHER

Costa Rica has two distinct seasons – dry and rainy. The dry season lasts from December through April and the rainy season lasts from May through November. During the rainy season it typically rains every day for hours at a time, although mornings can be sunny. During the dry season there will still be rain, but much less in volume and frequency.

Despite the fluctuation in rain, Costa Rica's temperatures do not vary much throughout the year – the average temperatures range from 70 to 81 degrees Fahrenheit. Coastal locations are much warmer than the capital city of San José and nearby mountain villages. The country also has lots of microclimates, so the temperature can be vastly different in locations that are even just a ten-minute drive apart.



QUICK GUIDE TO PACKING

Because temperatures can vary, it is a good idea to pack clothes that can be layered. You may need pants and a light sweatshirt in the evenings. Because Costa Rica is so humid, quick dry pants and shirts are recommended for comfort.

Hiking is a large part of Costa Rica's tourism and therefore it is recommended to bring hiking boots or sturdy tennis shoes for exploring the natural landscapes. Rain will most likely be a part of your experience, so a light rain jacket and umbrella will

come in handy. Costa Ricans tend to dress casually, so you will not be out of place wearing casual clothes while doing activities during the day. However, if you plan to dine out in the evening, dressy casual clothes, such as a dress or jeans and a nice top, are more appropriate.