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## Costa Rica Experience

Adventure



Relaxation



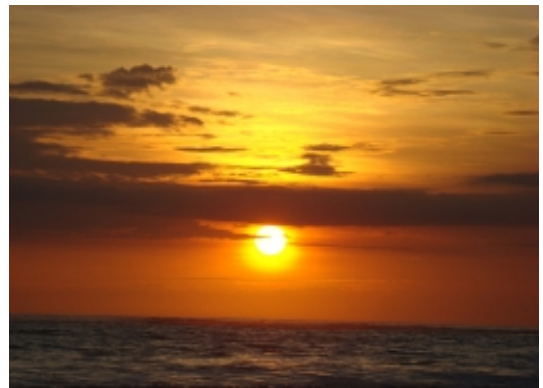
Culture



**Trip Name:** Costa Rica Experience    **Trip Code:** CRXC    **Duration:** From 4 weeks

### Trip Highlights

- Volunteer on our awesome Sea Turtle conservation project
- Get off the beaten track and see the most epic parts of the country
- White water rafting down a class 3-4 rapid, anyone?
- Take a trip by kayak to Isla Chora, and snorkel over stunning coral reefs
- Help improve the living conditions of the local people by building homes for underprivileged families
- Surf in one of the best spots in Central America!



### Overview

If you're looking for an awesome four week adventure, then our action packed, epic Costa Rica Experience is what you've been looking for! Starting in the buzzin' capital of San Jose in the centre of Costa Rica, we will take all of you Real Gappers around the country of our dreams- from the gorgeous Pacific coast, which just so happens to be one of the best surf spots in Central America, to the epic Arenal volcano, one of the most active in the Americas and then down to Panama and the fantastic Bocas del Torro islands for a chill out sesh!

In amongst all of the travelling action, you'll get your very own slice of adventure... (white water rafting? Surfing? Snorkelling and kayaking? Yes please!). You'll also get the chance to help out on some of our most rewarding volunteer projects, from sea turtle conservation to helping build new homes for disadvantaged local people and it's awesome to see how far your hard work really goes. So if you're up for an adventure filled, jam packed itinerary of a lifetime- then the Costa Rica Experience is for you!

### Destination Info

It's blatantly obvious why Costa Rica is loved by travellers from all over the world. It has something for everybody,

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from the mind blowing beaches of the Pacific Coast, to the untouched rainforest which covers a hefty amount of the country.

With over 27% of the country being made up of protected habitats and national parks, Costa Rica is a playground for nature lovers- especially those which thrive on exploration. Your experience of Costa Rica will encompass everything from its rich colonial heritage to its colourful towns and vibrant, friendly people.

## Itinerary



### Day 1: Arrival

One of our in-country Real Gappers will collect you from the airport and take you to your hostel accommodation in Alajuela. If your flight arrives before 6pm you're in luck- we host an awesome welcome dinner in a great local restaurant on your first night where you'll get the chance to tickle your tastebuds with your first taste of life in Costa Rica. Depending on your arrival time there may also be some free time before the meal for you to kick back and relax.

### Day 2: Getting started

Rise and shine! It's going to be an early start today as we begin with your orientation sesh- between 8.00am and 8:30am a Real Gapper will come to the hostel to collect you, and walk you through the town of Alajuela to the Real Gap offices, where you'll be given breakfast. The orientation session generally runs from 8.30am until approx 10.30am with a 15 minute break, so you'll get to learn loads about the area and ask any questions you may have. After the orientation we'll get stuck straight in and take you to the Pacific coast which is the location of your first volunteer placement at the Turtle Conservation project. This could be in one of two locations- Junquillal or Zapotillal (...you'll get given a packed lunch too, so food will be sorted!).

### Day 3-6: Turtle conservation

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Today's the day that you'll begin lending a hand on our fantastic volunteer placement on the Pacific coast. You will spend five nights at the project in the volunteer house. Duties at the project are completely varied depending on what needs doing at the time, but you could be patrolling the beach, helping to clear the area, or releasing baby turtles into the sea!



## Day 7: Surfers Paradise

After breakfast we'll say goodbye to the project and head up to Playa Grande beach by public transport. We'll then get a boat across the river and walk up the beach to our hostel!

## Day 8: Surf's Up!

It's time to hit the beach for a surfing lesson! We'll start off with the basics (i.e- learning to stand up on the board from the safety of the beach, etc... you get the drill), and then it'll be time to hit the waves with your English speaking professional surf instructor for a 2 hour long lesson! Lessons will be taken in groups according to group size.

## Day 9: Bijagua

Today we'll travel by public transport up into the mountains, to the little village of Bijagua in the northern part of Costa Rica. We'll be staying in 'cabinas'- comfortable, rustic accommodation close to the centre of the village and all amenities.

## Day 10: Rainforest adventure

After a hearty local breakfast, we'll venture up into a private rainforest reserve to see the tree canopy from above! This part of the forest boasts three hanging bridges to walk across- so it's an awesome way to see all of the

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wildlife that Costa Rica has to offer! The hike will take about 2 hours and then in the afternoon you'll have the option of visiting a local farm, whose owners pride themselves on rescuing all kinds of flora and fauna. Want to get up close and personal with a boa constrictor or a red eyed tree frog? This is your chance! (This trip is an optional extra). Or you can just take this extra time to relax to the sound of the cicadas and take in the breathtaking view of the mountains from the cabins!



## Day 11: Saddle up!

An early start today as we'll have breakfast at the lodge, then head back into the town of Bijagua to pick up our steeds! We'll spend 2 hours on horseback riding through the lush jungle and through rivers until we reach Volcan Tenorio National Park. Here we dismount and continue on foot up through the trails of the park, until we reach the majestic Rio Celeste (also known as the 'blue lagoon') with a waterfall and the viewpoint. The hike will take around 3 hours and at the end of it a traditional lunch awaits us in a local 'soda' (small Costa Rican diner serving local specialities).

## Day 12: Volcano!

After breakfast, we will continue our travels by public transport to the epic Volcano Arenal – a must see on any trip to Costa Rica! The Arenal volcano is one of the most active volcanoes in the Americas. We'll stay in a family run hotel, which has an amazing view of the perfect conical volcano outside! You'll have free time to explore the charming town of La Fortuna, with plenty of souvenir shops, cafès and internet cafes - or you maybe you could treat yourself to a massage after yesterdays hike!

## Day 13: Trekking and hot springs!

We venture a bit closer to the Arenal Volcano today; we'll drive to the other side of the Volcano where we'll enter Volcan Arenal National Park. After a short hike through the dry tropical forest, we'll reach the old lava flows from the huge eruption in 1968. Later on, we move to a safe observation to watch the volcano; if you're lucky you may feel the ground tremble and see the columns of smoke, or ash and lava in a natural display of fireworks.

Then it's time to relax as we finish the day at Baldi Hot Springs – natural thermal pools at the bottom of the smoldering volcano! There are 23 different pools of varying temperatures along with water slides, saunas, wet bars and botanical gardens all for you to explore and enjoy! If you're lucky you may be able to see the lava flowing from the continuously erupting crater in the distance.

## Day 14: Whitewater rafting baby!

Today we hit the white water for an adrenaline pumping rafting trip! Our rafting guides will pick us up from the hostel and take us to where the tour begins. After a safety briefing, we start this adrenaline packed tour down class 3-4 rapids. The tour takes approximately 3 hours and we will be met at the end by our guide who will have prepared a fabulous lunch on the river banks!



## Day 15: Zip wiring!

Today we say goodbye to La Fortuna and the volcano, and head into the hills again...although not hiking! We will be spending the day on a zip wire tour through the forests which is around an hour from San Ramon in the mountains. In total there are nine platform cables, a tarzan swing and three extra long cables, so it's going to be a mega fun day! Whizzing through the canopy on a zipline is an experience not to be missed!

## Day 16-20: House building for the locals of San Ramon

Our work schedule and construction site will be discussed with you once you arrive in Costa Rica; transport to and from your building site is included during your days of project work. Building new homes for the underprivileged is so rewarding and it's a great opportunity for you to meet the locals!

## Day 21: San Jose

We say goodbye to San Ramon today and head back into the buzzing capital city of Costa Rica, San Jose. Our accommodation is in a lively hostel located in Barrio Amon in the centre of the city. We will take a walking tour around the capital, taking in sights such as the National Theatre, Plaza de Cutura, the central market and the artisan fair.

## Day 22: Caribbean coast

We travel towards the Caribbean by public transport which will take us down to the Caribbean coast to Puerto Viejo. Here we will stay in a beach house and the rest of the day will be free time for you to sit back and relax!



## Day 23: Panama here we come!

Today we'll say goodbye to Costa Rica for a few days, as we'll be off to explore the islands off the coast of Panama!

We'll take the 2 hour journey down to the border of Panama by public transport. After completing all the necessary immigration requirements, we're free to explore another country- wahay!

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Once we're in Panama, we'll travel by minibus down to the docks where we'll hop into a water taxi over to the beautiful islands of Bocas del Toro. From the border crossing, the journey is approximately 1.5 hours- which will fly by in no time!

Our home for the next few days? A quiet hostel with an amazing decking area over the ocean, which is located on the main island of Isla Colon. It's going to be an epic few days! The rest of the afternoon is free to explore, go swimming or take that well deserved cocktail!

*Please note that Immigration costs not included, typically you should budget \$10 (US) for the crossing.*

## **Day 24: Snorkelling!**

It's a full day today as we head out on the boat! First stop is dolphin bay, where you'll hopefully get the chance to see these awesome mammals swimming wild and free in the ocean. Next we'll head off to Coral Cay to snorkel around the beautiful reef- if you're lucky you may see moray eels, lobsters, rays and possibly a turtle or two!

After snorkelling the tour stops for a lunch break before continuing onto Bastimentos island and the private Red Frog Beach (\$3 entrance fee not included)

Our last stop is another snorkel experience on a high drop off with a possibility that you may see sea horses, barracudas, crabs and maybe even a nurse shark!

## **Day 25: Mangroves and waterways!**

Today we will jump onto our kayaks and head out on an adventure through the mangroves on a real exploration trip. Our final destination is to find an old sunken ship and go for a snorkel around it! The trip will last around 4 hours and be split into 2 groups depending on the number of people on your trip.

## **Day 26: Starfish Beach!**

Today we will be visiting Starfish Beach. Kick back and relax, top up your tan, explore the local area and keep your eyes peeled, you might spot a starfish!

## Day 27: Last day in Panama!

Today we're going to head off to the ultra-remote Zapatillas Islands, a pristine marine national park which is approximately a one hour boat ride from Bocas del Toro. You'll be spending the day on these islands, so you can explore to your heart's content! ( \$5 park fee not included)

## Day 28: Goodbye Panama!

Today we'll say goodbye to Panama ('bye Panama!') and head back into the capital city of San Jose. We still have to pass through immigration so keep those passports handy!

We should arrive back in San Jose sometime in the afternoon where we will hop on another bus back to the hostel in Alajuela, where we started this awesome adventure four weeks ago.

We'll set up a farewell dinner for you all- which will be the perfect time to reminisce about the awesome time you've had on the Costa Rica Experience!

## Day 29: Farewell

Today's the day we all have to say goodbye. Boo. No activities are planned for this day, but of course we'll drop you all back off at San Jose airport for your flights home!

## Accommodation

The types of accommodation will vary throughout the programme from hostels to beach cabins to a lodge in rainforest!

## Programme Services and Facilities

### Internet

There is Internet access at the backpackers hostel, and also at the Real Gap office in Alajuela, which is available to all customers during orientation. You will also find Internet cafés around the country, which usually charge around \$1.50 - \$3 per hour.

### Telephone



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There are plenty of public telephones in Alajuela and all over Costa Rica. These will usually operate with phone cards, which you can purchase from small shops and kiosks. Please check that the phone card you buy is suitable for international calls.

Your mobile phone may or may not work in Costa Rica, depending on your network, and if it does, please be aware that in many areas you may not always get a signal. It is not possible to buy a SIM card in Costa Rica unless you are a landline owner, which can take up to four months to achieve, so please bear this in mind when deciding whether or not to take your mobile phone.

The international dialling code for Costa Rica is +506.

## Laundry

Laundry facilities will depend on your location; it is advisable to take some travel wash with you just in case.

## Meals

Some meals are included in your programme, these are noted on your programme itinerary. On the days where meals are not included this is a fantastic opportunity to sample some of the traditional local dishes that Costa Rica and Panama has to offer; food is extremely cheap to buy in both countries.

## What's Included

- Airport transfer
- All accommodation
- Meals according to itinerary
- Welcome and farewell dinner
- All tours and activities as per itinerary
- 24 hour emergency help and support



## What's Not Included

- Flights
- Travel insurance
- Some meals
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal Expenditure



## Is This Trip For You?

### Volunteer Requirements

- No Spanish is required to take part in this programme, however a basic knowledge will be beneficial to you and the local people that you will be working with.
- Volunteers should be physically fit and be able to swim with confidence.
- Flexibility, enthusiasm and a willingness to work is always welcome!

## Additional Information

### Your Volunteer Placements

The Costa Rica Experience gives you the chance to take part in a four-week adventure in this amazing country. The programme includes a two short volunteer project placements and a number of excursions.

#### ***Sea Turtle Conservation Caribbean Coast***

Play a part in the effort to preserve one of the planets oldest species on this isolated beach on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. Volunteers are desperately needed to help patrol the beach at night time looking for nesting female turtles – and to relocate her eggs to a safe location inside a custom built hatchery. Without volunteers help, most nests would be poached by humans, eaten by wild animals or washed away in the tide – so every helping hand is appreciated!

The project itself is run by a local NGO, and receives no funding. Therefore be prepared to get back to basics on a beautiful deserted beach! Our accommodation for the week is a rustic style wooden house on the beach, with dorm rooms for the volunteers.

In order for these conservation projects to work, they need a steady flow of enthusiastic volunteers, not only to work directly with the turtles, but also to keep the logistics of the camp running. This means that there is plenty of day time work to be done as well. Although tiring, the memories of releasing dozens of baby turtles back into the ocean are unforgettable!

Generally volunteers are responsible for the following:

- Supervising the turtle hatchery in short shifts 24 hours a day
- Night patrols
- Necessary maintenance on the existing volunteer house
- Collecting scientific data of both adult and baby turtles
- Collection of food and fresh water for volunteer consumption (organized by project host)

#### ***Building Houses for underprivileged families in San Ramon***

A rewarding way to help a family in need – help build them their own home!

Our building projects work in conjunction with Fundacion Costa Rica – Canada Rural housing programme, to help families with low income become home owners. The foundation supports families from the first application for

housing, helping them fulfill the necessary requirements, support during the construction process, and collecting the monthly loan payments.

The Fundación para la Vivienda Rural Costa Rica-Canadá has left its footprints in the rural areas, changing the lives of the people and promoting a substantial improvement in each of the communities and families.

Places that didn't have public services such as drinking water, electricity and telephone, now have them. Also, places with no adequate access roads, now have the possibility of improving them.

Volunteers play a huge part in the whole construction process. Taking instruction from a local foreman and local builders, we are there from start to finish, from digging the foundations, mixing cement, brick laying and leveling floors – this really is giving back to the communities as you see the results of your hard work each day!

Depending on which stage the house is at you may get involved in some of the following tasks:

- Digging foundations and drainage trenches
- Digging the septic tank
- Mixing cement (by hand!)
- Constructing earthquake supports
- Bricklaying
- Plastering
- Construction of roof trellises

## What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore you may not need all of the listed items on your travels.

## Personal Admin

- Passport, travel insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money
- Cash for airport departure tax
- Proof of inoculations - including yellow fever - please speak to your GP about any other necessary immunizations
- Guidebook on country – recommended Lonely Planet or Footprints

## General

- Camera / Film / Batteries
- Notebooks and pens, diary etc
- Torch / Extra Batteries
- Sunglasses
- Pocket-knife (comes in handy for general use – please do not pack in your hand luggage!)

- Water bottle – at least one litre
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- A sleeping bag liner (in some accommodation sheets are not included)
- Mosquito Net (if required)
- Personal enjoyment - books, cards, music etc
- Personal hygiene items (deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc

## Clothing

- Hat
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Sandals
- Waterproof Jacket
- Fleece/pullover (for cool evenings)
- Long trousers and long sleeved top- must be dark coloured for Sea Turtle conservation project.
- Clothes and shoes suitable for working on a building site
- Swimwear
- Towel

## Medical

- Personal medication
- First Aid Kit (e.g. Antihistamines, Anti- diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito and insect repellent

## Minimum Age

The minimum age for this trip is 18.

## Minimum Numbers

This trip has a minimum number of people in order for it to run. Please do not book flights until your travel advisor confirms that the trip has met the minimum number and the departure is confirmed.

## Flights

Your flight to Costa Rica should arrive at Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO), San Jose, Costa Rica at any time on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date.

**Please note:** This programme requires a minimum number of participants to run. Please contact us to confirm whether the minimum numbers have been met for your start date, we recommend that you do not book your flights until we have confirmed these numbers and the programme will be running.

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your Online account, or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

**Please note:** If you are flying to Costa Rica via the USA you will need to obtain Travel Authorisation by registering online through the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) no later than 72 hours before departure. This is compulsory and will cost USD\$14 to register. To register, please visit: [www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov](http://www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov)

## FAQs

### 1. How many people can go on this trip?

Typically the Costa Rica Experience has a maximum of 10 people. A buddy list will be sent to you before you leave with contact details of other people on the trip, so you can get to know each other before you leave.

### 2. What is the currency?

The Currency in Costa Rica is the Colon. You would typically pay for day to day things (meals, drinks etc) with local currency, although for many tourist activities they prefer US dollars. In Panama the currency is the Balboa, although the US dollar is also legal tender and the exchange rate is tied to the dollar so 1 Balboa is equal to 1 US Dollar.

### 3. Can I drink the tap water?

In most parts of Costa Rica you can drink the tap water. Speak with your tour guide before drinking it though as some of the areas you will visit on this trip is it not advisable.

### 4. Do I need Malaria tablets?

There are areas along the Caribbean coast that are considered low-mid risk areas. Consult your doctor at least 6 week before you leave to get the most up to date advice. Unfortunately we cannot offer medical advice as we are not medically qualified to do so.

### 5. Can I continue with the volunteering projects after the Experience?

Yes, absolutely! Many people choose to remain in Costa Rica to volunteer after the Experience and it's a great way of getting to know the locals better. Speak with one of our travel advisers and ask thier advice as many of them have travelled to the projects and can give first hand advice.

## Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

## Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

## Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

## Money Matters

The currency in Costa Rican is the Colón (CRC), which is subdivided into 100 Céntimos. Coins come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 and notes come in denominations of 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000 and 10,000.

While Costa Rica's close proximity to North America means that US Dollars are widely accepted at most establishments in Buena Vista and some large country towns, it is advisable to have some local currency to pay for transportation or goods at smaller establishments.

Credit cards such as MasterCard and Visa are accepted in cities and most tourist areas, though use in less commercial areas may be limited. This is also true of ATM machines or 'Cajeros automáticos'. ATMs commonly dispense both US Dollars and Nuevos Soles and usually charge for using international cards.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$8.46  
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$1.66  
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.29  
Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.96

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

## Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Citizens of the European Union, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia will be issued a Tourist Visa on entry for stays of up to 90 days. For longer stays or other nationalities, please consult your nearest Costa Rican

Embassy or High Commission.

## Cultural Considerations

Costa Rica is caught between old cultural forces and new ones. Family ties are strong, and the major traditions within family are often strongly religious, such as: baptisms, first communions, engagement parties, weddings and funerals. Gender roles tend to be fairly traditional, though in urban areas women's opportunities are improving all the time. The Costa Ricans are friendly people and it is customary to greet and part with handshakes.

## Religion

Roman Catholicism is the official religion and about 90% of the population is Roman Catholic. Religion is an important part of life in Costa Rica, and we would urge you to be respectful at all times in and around places of worship. Do not be surprised to see individuals crossing themselves when passing any object of religious significance or reciting religious adages at appropriate times.

## Clothing

Casual dress is fine but you should avoid beachwear away from the coast and dress conservatively, especially in rural areas, which tend to be fairly traditional and religious. When entering a religious area, please make sure you are appropriately covered.

## Tipping

A 10% service charge and 13% tax is automatically added to restaurant bills. Taxi drivers are usually not tipped.

## Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

## Safety

Unfortunately, tourists are often targets for pickpockets and thieves. Please educate yourself about South America and Costa Rica in particular, before you leave, so that you can be alert to all types of situations. Safety guidelines will be covered in detail at your orientation session upon arrival but please familiarise yourself with the following general travel safety rules.

- Avoid travelling alone, especially at night.
- Find out where the unsafe areas are and avoid them.
- When travelling keep all-important documents and valuables in a safe place, like an inner hidden pocket or money belt.
- Carry only as much cash as you think you will need for the day.
- Don't wear expensive jewellery or watches.
- Be wary of people who seem too friendly too fast.
- Keep cameras out of sight. Always keep bags and purses in your sight, especially on public transport.
- Before swimming, ask how safe the area is.

In Costa Rica you should avoid sleeping on beaches or camping outside of official sites, as unprotected areas can be dangerous at night. Riptides (or ripcurrents) are a problem in the seas of Costa Rica, and can be very dangerous. Always follow beach guidelines and do not swim or surf against the advice of the coastguard.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

USA: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

Australia: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

## ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

## Language Guide

The main spoken language in Costa Rica is Spanish. Here are a few basic phrases that should help you get by during your trip. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello - *Hola!*

Good day - *Buenas días!*

How are you? - *Como estas? ('Como estas usted?' if you need to be extra formal!)*

Goodbye - *Adios*

Please - *Por favour*

Thank you - *Gracias*

I don't understand - *No entiendo*

I don't speak Spanish - *No hablo espanol*

Sorry/excuse me - *Lo siento*



Where is...? - *Donde esta...?*

The bill please - *La cuenta por favour*

## Food & Drink

The standards of health and hygiene are among the best in Latin America - milk, ice cream and other dairy products are safe. Avoid uncooked meats. If you are at all unsure about something, remember it is always better to be safe than sorry. Typical dishes of Costa Rica include:

- Gallos - Filled tortillas
- Casado - Rice, beans, beef or fish, fried plantain, chopped cabbage
- Arreglados - Puff pastries filled with beef, chicken, vegetables or cheese
- Sopa Negra - Soup with black beans and an egg in it
- Gallo Pinto - Rice & beans with sour cream or fried eggs

## Drinks

You can drink tap water in most major towns, though be advised that it is heavily chlorinated. In other locations bottled water is readily available.

There are many types of cold fruit drinks, (made with milk or water). They are very popular and most of them are delicious. Coffee is usually good. The local beers are Bavaria, Pilsen, Imperial and Tropical.

## Smoking / Alcohol / Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in Costa Rica, and readily available. However, please respect other volunteers. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Many regions in Costa Rica have banned or limited smoking in public places and many restaurants will have a separate seating area for those wishing to smoke.

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into Costa Rica. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, Costa Rica has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including "soft" drugs like marijuana, are ILLEGAL. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

## Public Holidays

To view a list of the public holidays for Costa Rica, please see the link below:

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays/costa-rica/](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/costa-rica/)

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. Many schools, government offices, stores and banks are closed on National Holidays. Please note that there may be slight date variations for some of the holidays each year and that the list is not exhaustive.

## Weather

Temperatures in Costa Rica are high throughout the year with the warmest weather on the lowlands and the Caribbean and Pacific coasts. San Jose and other mountainous areas are cooler and vary between 16-26°. The hottest months of the year are between March and April with the rainy season falling between March and November; the coast is humid and rainy for most of the year.

## Time

Costa Rica is six hours behind GMT.

## Electricity

In Costa Rica the electric system is 120 Volts and frequency 60 Hertz. If your device does not accept electricity at this voltage you will need an adapter.

Outlets in Costa Rica generally accept 1 type of plug:



Flat blade plug

## Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as we make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

## Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

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