

# 25 COSTA RICA *Bucket List* EXPERIENCES

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

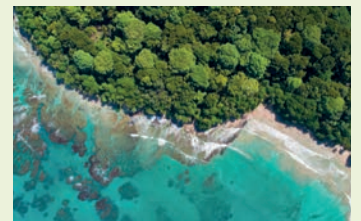
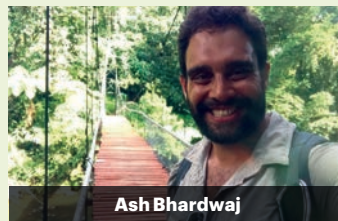
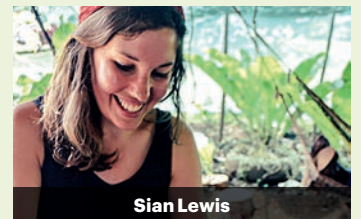
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FIND YOUR SANCTUARY

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Join **Julia Bradbury** and travellers **Ash Bhardwaj**, **Chloe Gunning** and **Sian Lewis** in finding sanctuary in Costa Rica. Head off to the brand-new website to discover their inspirational videos and articles, and to catch up on their free virtual events. Nature, wildlife and adventures that are good for the mind, body and the environment: Costa Rica has it all.

**[costarica-sanctuary.com](https://costarica-sanctuary.com)**



# WELCOME...



Everybody that you meet in Costa Rica has this wonderful expression: Pura Vida! And it's not just a greeting: It basically means goodbye, have a lovely day, how are you? It's always said with a huge smile, and I think it really encapsulates the atmosphere of

Costa Rica, which is 'pure life'. The smiles are constant: the locals are incredibly friendly and they're very proud of their country, and quite rightly so.

My first impression of Costa Rica? It's just dazzling. It's such an outstandingly beautiful country and after travelling there briefly for work, it was instantly on my bucket list and I knew I had to return.

And when I did, what an adventure I had! It's probably easier to tell you what adventures you can't do in Costa Rica. You can have a go at everything from surfing, ziplining and kayaking to hiking and rappelling. There's so much to do if you have an adventurous spirit.

The nature and wildlife are spectacular and because Costa Rica has done such a great job of protecting its natural spaces and nurturing its forests, the landscapes are abundant with wildlife and it's beautiful to see.

I believe that if the natural world and natural beauty are important to you then Costa Rica is one of the places on the globe that you must see. It really does have something for everyone, and it is breathtakingly beautiful.

*Julia*







# ADVENTURE



## 1 Conquer the rapids

Costa Rica's rivers swell during rainy season, so the best time to raft is from May to October. Rivers are graded; slow currents are classed as one or two, while six is the most challenging. Nervous? Then avoid ones with names like The Terminator (on Sarapiquí) or El Abismo (on Reventazón). Novices might want to try Peñas Blancas or Balsa, where you may spot herons, sloths and monkeys.

If you want to shake things up, opt for Savegre, which has calmer spots interspersed with rapids. Alternatively, paddle hell for leather on Río Toro, which is class two to four. Save Pacuare for last, as it's voted among the world's best rivers for white-water rafting. You can snake along its 108km length from the Talamasca mountains to the Caribbean – as long as you survive its double drop rapids, that is!

## 2 Fly through the trees

Central America's longest zipline (1,590m) awaits at 100% Aventura in Monteverde. This is a heart-racing way to see the misty cloud forest and you will whizz down 11 ziplines before reaching the grand finale: Tarzan's Swing, which will drop you to the ground 45m below. A little further north of Monteverde is La Fortuna, where you can zipline with the backdrop of Arenal volcano.





Another nine ziplines and 13 platforms await in Costa Rica's south in Montezuma, at the southern tip of the Nicoya Peninsula. Zip through the broccoli-green canopy, pausing at each of the platforms to soak up the incredible views of the surrounding mountains and the glittering Pacific Ocean. You may even spot capuchin monkeys and colourful parrots (such as macaws), while the sounds of howler monkeys will echo through the trees. When your feet are back on solid ground, be sure to explore the many waterfalls of Montezuma and cool off in their natural pools.

**3 Swim with sharks** Whether you're an advanced diver or a first timer, there are plenty of underwater spots, teeming with sharks, that are suited to your level. Novices should head under the water at Drake Bay where reef sharks can be seen along with orcas, humpbacks and pilot whales.

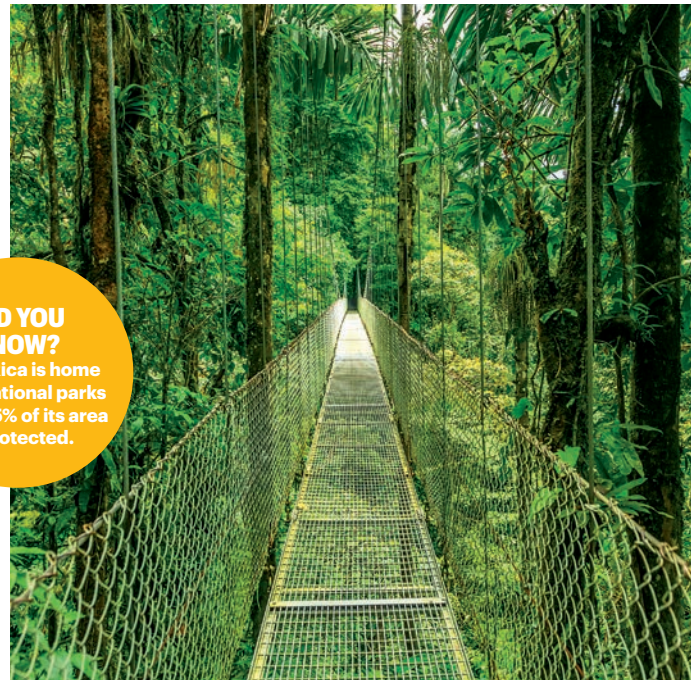
More experienced? Travel 30m below the surface at Bat Island, the only place in Costa Rica where you can experience bull sharks. Advanced certified divers can sail out to the far-flung Cocos Island, south-west of the mainland. This remote outpost is world-famous for its hundreds of hammerhead sharks and huge tiger sharks.

## 4 Gaze in awe at volcanoes

Costa Rica's north is home to five active volcanoes. To admire the most photogenic, visit La Fortuna, where you can combine gawping at the symmetrical cone of the 1,657m-high Arenal volcano with jungle treks. After stretching your legs, take a dip in one of the many hot spring pools and apply natural clay body masks made with volcanic ash. Then tick off the other active volcanoes

### DID YOU KNOW?

Costa Rica is home to 30 national parks and 25.5% of its area is protected.



### Up in the clouds

(clockwise from above) Take a stroll in a rainforest canopy; snorkelling with whale sharks in the Corcovado Peninsula; ziplining in Monteverde; white-water rafting; Arenal volcano

on the list – Poás, Rincón de la Vieja, Turrialba and, of course, Costa Rica's highest volcano, the 3,432m Irazú, the closest to the capital, San José.

Don't underestimate the thrill factor of dormant volcanoes either. Catarata Del Toro awaits exploration in the less-visited Central Valley. Listen to the crash of the waterfall from the top and feel its spray on your face as you descend into the 90m crater of an extinct volcano.

## 5 Trek the jungle

Over 90% of all organisms in a rainforest are found in the canopy, so what better place for a jungle adventure? At the Sky Walk at Monteverde Cloud Forest, six suspension bridges join together to form a 2.5km trail through Monteverde's canopy. Follow a tour guide across the knee-shakingly high bridges while learning about the native flora and fauna.

For an extra thrilling adventure, embark on a jungle trek in the dark. In both Monteverde and Manuel Antonio NP, you can join a guide for a night walk. While your sight will be diminished, your other senses will come alive: the smell of the damp on the jungle floor; the high-pitch buzz of the insects; the low grunts of the toads. The forest never sleeps so expect to see bright tree frogs, huge snakes and tarantulas. ▶







# SUSTAINABILITY



## 1 Stay in an eco-lodge

The first step to sustainable travel? Book yourself into an eco-lodge, preferably one with a Certificate of Sustainable Tourism (CST). They exist in harmony with their surroundings and offer low-impact adventures galore. Near Corcovado National Park, Lapa Rios Lodge is surrounded by primary forest – which puts waterfall hikes, birdwatching safaris and whale-watching right

on your doorstep. But the south-east has a wealth of award-winning accommodation: visitors to the Luna Lodge, Tiskita Jungle Lodge, Playa Cativo Lodge or Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge – to name just a few – will find themselves enjoying the balance of comfort with lush wilderness; while you're in the Golfo Dulce, Playa Nicuesa makes a fine base for kayaking, snorkelling and dolphin-watching.

On the east coast, Selva Bananito Lodge offers horse-riding, tree-planting and even gyrocopter experiences, while Rio Tropicales in Limon is perfect for white-water rafting on the nearby Pacuare River.

Approaching the northern border, at Hotel Capitán Suizo in Tamarindo, you can spy macaws, snorkel and watch whales while at Laguna del Lagarto Rainforest Lodge, near the Rio San Carlos, you can spy critically-



endangered great green macaws in their natural habitat.

## 2 Volunteer your time

Whether it's for a few days or an entire fortnight, volunteering can make a real difference – and Costa Rica has a wealth of wildlife-focused projects.

Las Pumas Rescue Centre offers rewarding volunteering programmes for wildlife – especially big cat – enthusiasts. Located just outside Cañas, the centre rescues and rehabilitates animals, providing care in their natural habitats. The centre offers volunteering positions for people interested in learning about the conservation of wildlife for a minimum stay of one and a half months. There's never more than eight volunteers at the centre at one time, so you need to be prepared to get your hands dirty.

## 3 Eat at an eco-farm

There are many places you can visit in Costa Rica to see how farmers use natural remedies instead of chemicals to protect their crops. For example, Costa Rican farmers will plant a colourful flower they know certain pests don't like instead of spraying their crops with pesticides.

You can see this in action at the Finca Educativa Don Juan. You can visit for the day or spend a night or two. You will get a tour of the



**Gone green** (clockwise from above) Being responsible has plenty of up-sides: try horse-riding; visit jaguars, dive the Isla del Caño and stay in an eco-lodge

farm and be treated to a feast of locally grown vegetables, beans and homemade salsas.

Or try Hacienda El Viejo, which offers mangrove tours and gives you the chance to infuse your own rum.

## 4 Protect the wild

Conservation projects dedicated to protecting the country's diverse flora and fauna can be found all over Costa Rica. And since many of them rely on money from visitors, the best way you can offer support is by going to see them.

The Rescate Wildlife Rescue Center (Also known as ZooAve) in Alajuela is just one example, and has spent over 30 years rehabilitating animals. Visit to see over 125 species including sloths, jaguar and pumas. Meanwhile, the Fundecodes volunteer programme aids flora research in six areas across the north-west's Tempisque Conservation Area.

Visit Pacuare Reserve on Costa Rica's east coast and join in with a walk of the coastline during turtle nesting and hatching season to help protect leatherback turtles – you can

even assist with the morning count of new hatchlings.

## 5 Take the pledge

Costa Rica is serious about protecting the environment and it wants to make sure its visitors are, too. The Pura Vida Pledge is a four-step plan that ensures more sustainable travelling.

Step one is to choose accommodation and tour operators that have a Certification of Sustainable Tourism (CST). Step two is all about carbon offsetting. So be sure to check your carbon footprint ([fonafifo.go.cr/en/calculadora](http://fonafifo.go.cr/en/calculadora)).

The third step is volunteering. Step four is quite simply about respecting the environment – so ensure you leave no trace. ►

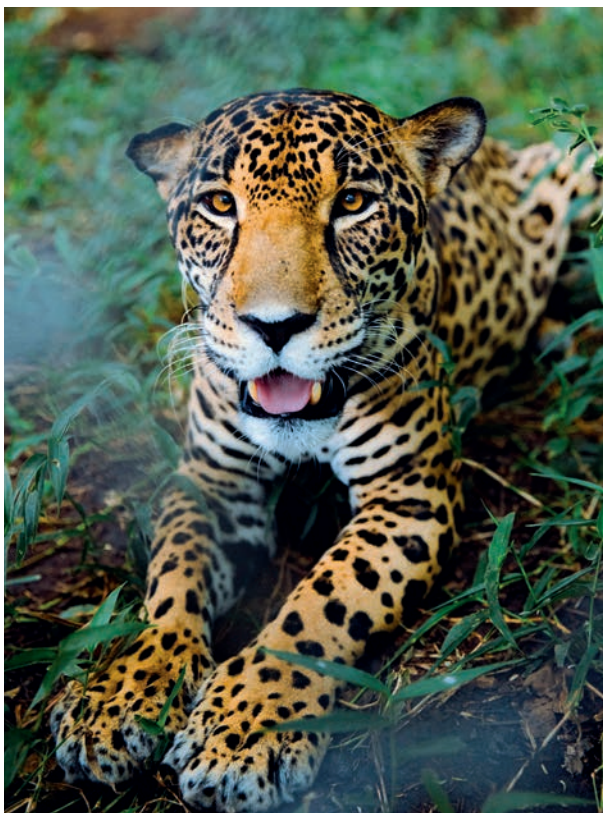
### DID YOU KNOW?

99% of Costa Rica's energy supply is renewable, and it aims to become entirely carbon-neutral by 2050.

### ONE TO WATCH



Scan the QR code to watch the full video on the Pura Vida Pledge featuring Lyn Hughes.







# NATURE & WILDLIFE



## 1 Go wild in the jungle

The undeniable star of Costa Rica's jungles are sloths. They may be slow moving, but that doesn't make them any easier to see. These smiling creatures live all over Costa Rica, one of the few countries that have both the two- and three-toed species. Other cute, common mammals you're likely to see in the jungles of Costa Rica are tapir, peccary and coati – a racoon-like

animal the size of a large cat. They're most often spotted around Arenal and Monteverde.

Look out for iguana in the Osa Peninsula, Arenal Volcano and Tortuguero National Park and don't miss Jesus Christ lizards walking on water at Cahuita National Park. Bigger reptiles can be seen in the jungle rivers, swamps and lagoons, which you can tour to uncover crocodiles and caimans.

Head to Corcovado to spot ocelots and margay cats. If you hire a guide – and if you get lucky – you might spot a jaguar in Corcovado in the biodiverse Osa Peninsula. While there's only thought to be around 30 of these cats left in this area, Osa boasts 2.5% of the entire planet's biodiversity.

## 2 Monkey business

The first time you're woken by the booming roars and shouts



of howler monkeys is when you really know you're in jungle territory. Staying in eco-lodges or family run accommodation on the edge of the parks is the best way to immerse yourself. Once there, you can explore with guides, wildlife-spotting by boat in Tortuguero on the east, for example, or by foot in Manuel Antonio Park on the west.

Alongside howler monkeys, you're also likely to see capuchin, squirrel and spider: tick all four species off in Corcovado NP. Watching them swing through the trees, sometimes with a baby clinging on, is mesmerising.

### 3 Turtle nesting

You won't be the only one enjoying Costa Rica's pristine beaches – a well-timed visit will see you enjoy watching turtles digging, laying and burying their eggs on the beach. It's always best to see them with an official guide to ensure you don't scare them.

Four turtle species can be found in Costa Rica. Leatherbacks are the largest and they love eating jellyfish. See them nesting between March and July on the Caribbean coast and between September and March on the Pacific coast. Green turtles

are the species' only herbivores; they nest between June and October in Tortuguero NP. Olive ridleys are the most abundant and they nest all year round on the Pacific Coast. To see endangered hawksbill, head to Cahuita NP (Sept to Oct). Visitors to Ostional beach between August and November could see up to 300,000 sea turtles arriving.

### 4 A birder's paradise

Bird watchers dream of seeing the vibrant year-round birdlife of Costa Rica. There are more bird species here than anywhere else in the world – more than 900. Visit in dry season (Jan-Apr) and you'll see herons, ducks and spoonbills around water and scarlet macaws in Manuel Antonio, Corcovado, Carara and Palo Verde National Parks. Hummingbirds breed November to March, so listen out for their calls around Arenal and in Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. You can see toucans there too, as well as in Manuel Antonio, Corcovado and Tortuguero national parks.

Sunbitterns can be seen in La Marta Wildlife Refuge close to Tapanti NP. Intrepid twitchers should also look out for fasciated tiger-heron, black-and-yellow tanager



**Totally resplendent** (clockwise from above) Resplendent quetzal; hawksbill turtle; flora in Drake Bay; a sloth

and russet antshrike. The most exotic bird has to be the resplendent quetzal: small with iridescent green-and-red colouring and long tail feathers, they can be found in the Monteverde Cloud Forest and Los Quetzales NP (Feb to May).

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Over the past six years, on average, a new species of wildlife has been discovered in Costa Rica every two-and-a-half days.



### 5 Under the sea

Be sure to explore off land, too. You can see migratory humpback whales almost all year round at Marino Ballena NP; they have two seasons – from mid-July to mid-Nov and mid-Dec to April. You'll likely spot dolphins, too as Costa Rica's waters are teeming with them. The Pacific coast is home to bottlenose, Risso's, rough-toothed, spinner and striped dolphins while on the Caribbean side you can find costero and bottlenose dolphins.

Those prepared to go deeper should dive during the dry season, when the water is at its clearest. Huge manta rays can be seen off the Catalina Islands (Dec to May) while Drake Bay's Cano Island hides an underwater world of bright corals, eels, reef sharks and sting rays. Beginners can test their skills at Manuel Antonio NP where turtles, octopus, lobsters and whitetip sharks await. ►





# MAKE IT HAPPEN

We've hand-selected some of the best tours to Costa Rica...

## Best for ADVENTURE

### Luxury Adventures in Costa Rica

#### Journey Latin America



Rafting the Pacuare river, gazing at the puffing Póas Volcano, canyoning, thermal pool dipping and wildlife watching: during this eight-day adventure with **Journey Latin America**, your feet will hardly touch the ground. The exhilarating days are bound to leave your heart racing and your muscles aching, so you'll be glad of the luxury lodges this tour offers, where you can relax while being surrounded by jungle.



### Rainforests, Rivers and Rapids

#### Trailfinders



This two-week tour with **Trailfinders** will see you enjoy adventures on land, on water and even in the air. Hike through thick forests by day and, by night, join monkeys and other wildlife up in the canopy on a walk across hanging bridges and hold on tight as you tumble down the Pacuare River in a raft. The last two days are spent soaking up the sand and sea at Puerto Viejo – a rest you will have well and truly earned after such an active trip.



## Best for SUSTAINABILITY

### Costa Rica Sustainable Wildlife Tour

#### Rainbow Tours



This **Rainbow Tours'** trip celebrates Costa Rica's sustainability.

Soak up jungle views in the Central Valley; spot sloths, macaws and monkeys in Corcovado National Park; enjoy beaches on the Pacific; and explore Monteverde's cloud forest. This tour ensures all hotels have been awarded the Certificate of Sustainable Tourism (CST) to help you leave no trace.



### Untouched Costa Rica

#### Pura Aventura



**Pura Aventura's** 17-day journey through the lesser-known areas ensures

sustainable travel by avoiding overdeveloped places and taking you off the beaten track so you can explore untouched nature without the crowds. Enjoy guided tours around the Golfo Dulce, spot wildlife from Pacuare's hanging bridges, hike through Bajos del Toro cloud forest and relax with the locals in Nosara.





## Best for WELLBEING

### Costa Rica Coast to Coast Ride

#### Trailfinders



Unspoilt nature, a sea breeze and two wheels: these components of **Trailfinder's Costa Rica Coast to Coast Ride** make for a slow-paced adventure to soothe both the body and the mind. You'll cycle through rural villages, past horizon-breaking coastal views, through wildlife-rich forests, up and down misty mountains, and will stop to enjoy wildlife tours, incredible accommodation and meet farmers along the way.

### Wellness Costa Rica

#### Healing Holidays



A trip to Costa Rica with **Healing Holidays** is all about relaxing and rejuvenating. Enjoy wellness activities that connect you to nature such as hiking, outdoor yoga, surfing and white-water rafting. You will feast on healthy, organic and locally-sourced food. Healing Holidays has hand-picked the finest spas and retreats, so you can enjoy top spa treatments that use local products such as coffee and chocolate.



## Best for NATURE & WILDLIFE

### Flora and Fauna of Costa Rica

#### Journey Latin America



What better way to understand Costa Rica's diverse nature than to hear from the locals

that live here? On this 12-day trip with **Journey Latin America**, a local guide will show you the natural wonders of Costa Rica. Expect to see turtles at Tortuguero National Park, a rainbow-spectrum of birds in the Monteverde cloud forest, the sparkling pools and waterfalls of Rio Celeste, and crocodiles among the mangroves in Carara.

### Natural Wonders of Costa Rica

#### Latin Routes



This ten-day journey with **Latin Routes** will get you off the beaten track and will give you

a chance to stay in remote locations, where you will be surrounded by unspoilt landscapes that are home to a huge diversity of wildlife. Highlights include a quetzal trail walking tour, hiking to the Fatima waterfall and exploring the Tenorio National Park, which is home to howler monkeys, toucans and even big cats such as pumas and jaguars.



## Best for CULTURE

### Costa Rica Experience

#### Intrepid Travel



Wander the bustling streets of San José. Kick back at the rustic

beach town of Quepos. Meet the locals by lending a hand on a rural farmstay near Santa Rosa de Pocosol. Spot quetzals in Monteverde's cloud forest. This nine-day tour with **Intrepid Travel** will leave you with a deeper understanding of Costa Rica's culture alongside a healthy dose of nature and adventure.

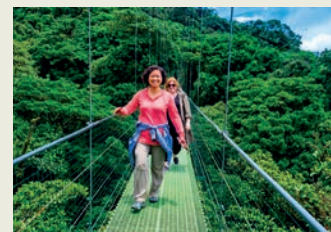
### The Heartlands of Costa Rica

#### Travel Local



This ten-day tour with **Travel Local** will reveal Costa Rica's rich culture and

history. You will visit Guayabo National Monument to see the largest collection of pre-Columbian ruins, learn to make chocolate with locals and stay at a coffee plantation, all while being surrounded by Costa Rica's nature with plenty of time to admire the vast landscapes and wildlife wonders, too.







# CULTURE

## 1 Get a caffeine fix

Since being introduced to Costa Rica in the late 1700s, coffee has become one of Costa Rica's top exports. By law, the country only grows 100% Arabica beans; Coffee grows in eight regions; among these, Tarrazú is thought to produce the highest quality beans, known for their strong aroma and vanilla, cocoa and caramel notes. There are many coffee experiences available around Costa

Rica. One good option is La Montaña Tarrazú plantation. As well as sampling a cup of fresh Joe you can ask a coffee producer about the difference between washed coffee – when the cherry is removed before the bean is dried – and naturally processed coffee, when the fruit is removed after the drying process. Honey processed coffee is somewhere in-between, as part of the pulp is left on for a sweeter flavour.





**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Costa Rica is a peaceful and democratic country. It has not had an army since 1948.

## 2 Cowboy culture

The Nicoya Peninsula is home to the *sabaneros* – Costa Rica's cowboys. Don a cowboy hat and join them on horseback to herd cattle: a hands-on way to experience their way of life and gain an understanding of the deep connection they have with nature. Help them to wash and feed the horses before hearing more stories of this fascinating culture around their dinner table. Hacienda El Viejo in the northern wetlands is a good place to start.

You'll see the whole journey from bean to bar. Pick the pod from the cacao plant and suck on the fruit until you get down to the bean. The beans are then sun-dried and roasted over a fire before being crushed by a stone and grinded into a chocolate paste. You'll then have a chance to make your own chocolate truffles – the perfect souvenir.

## 5 Food for thought

Costa Rica's cuisine reflects the history and diversity of the country. Visitors to San José should check out the buzzing Barrio Escalante to enjoy the eclectic culinary experiences on offer.

Beyond the capital, head to Costa Rica's Caribbean side to enjoy *rondón* – a seafood stew filled with coconut milk and plantain. *Olla de carne* is another Costa Rican classic – a beef stew bursting with potatoes and vegetables. Rice and beans are a staple and *gallo pinto* is usually served for breakfast alongside eggs and fried plantain.

It should come as no surprise that seafood features heavily here. *Ceviche*, a raw dish flavoured with lime is a refreshing meal on a hot day while a *pescado entero* – literally a whole fried fish – is rather satisfying after a day of hiking. The Pacific side isn't just worth seeking out for its seafood: it's established on the cooking scene for fusing Latin tastes with flavours from around the world. ►

## 3 Meet the Bri Bri

The Bri Bri live in a protected reserve in the mountains near Cahuita, off the Caribbean coast. The indigenous group maintain a traditional way of life, speaking their own language, making bows and arrows for archery, and hunting for fish.

Embark on a tour to the Yorking river – or Yorkín – part of the Sixaola River that marks part of the border between Costa Rica and Panama. After a trip in a wooden canoe, you'll arrive on the indigenous territory, where cocoa and medicinal plants grow alongside corn, plantain and cassava. Dinner is cooked on an open fire, and you'll sleep in a thatched hut.

## 4 From bean to bar

Go on a chocolate tour in La Fortuna to see coffee growing alongside sugar cane and avocado.

**A taste of Costa Rica**  
(clockwise from above)  
Enjoy thrilling local cuisine; a chocolate tasting tour; red coffee cherries; vibrant San José



Shutterstock, Costa Rica Tourism Board





# WELLBEING



## 1 Yoga

Yogis should head to the north-eastern Nosara region, famous for its wellness retreats. With its long stretches of golden sands and expanses of forests, you'll soon see why it is so easy to relax here. At Nosara's Harmony Hotel, guests can combine morning yoga sessions with soothing surf lessons on the waves that lap Guiones Beach. Cala Luna in Guanacaste is surrounded by

greenery; the hotel offers yoga classes as well as sound therapy, reiki and other holistic treatments to soothe both body and mind. The boutique Lagarta Lodge meanwhile sits in a privately owned biological reserve.

Over on Costa Rica's Caribbean side, Samasati Yoga and Wellness Retreat offers swaying hammocks, surfing and yoga in the laidback coastal town of Puerto Viejo. With meditation classes, yoga and

breathwork all on the cards, you're bound to leave feeling rejuvenated.

## 2 Farm-to-table food

Being mindful about what you put in your body is easy in Costa Rica due to the bounty of fresh fruit and vegetables available.

To learn about seasonal ingredients in Costa Rica's cuisine, join a course led by a local. Try the cooking class experience at Casa Turire, which





organises lessons with a local Turrialba valley chef. Once you've picked vegetables and herbs from their organic garden, you'll learn traditional recipes and then sample your creations.

### 3 Hot springs

Costa Rica's position on the Pacific Ring of Fire means it has an explosive history and volcanic topography. The result of all this geothermal activity? Natural, mineral-rich hot springs where you can relax and feel your aches melt away into the bath-like water.

A good place to relax in the hot springs is along the Tabacon River where a series of deep pools allow you to have a warm soak while

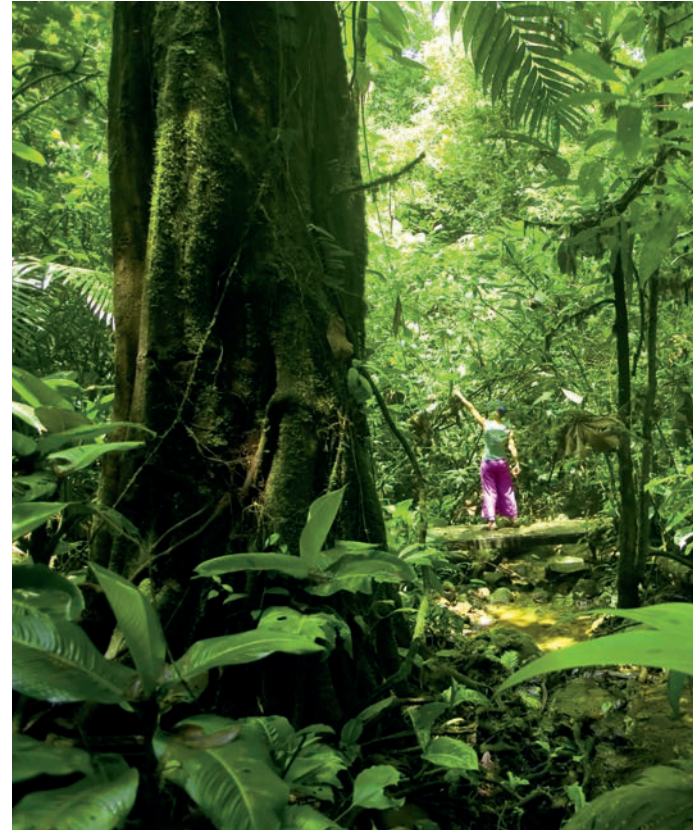
listening to the sounds of the jungle. Meanwhile, on the Orosi River, the luxurious Hacienda Orosi awaits – a thermal mineral spa where steam rises from the myriad hot pools. The water here is rich in calcium, magnesium and potassium and can reach temperatures of up to 38°C. Recline in one of the many pools while admiring the view of the surrounding green hills and valleys.

### 4 Forest bathing

With 30 national parks all hiding numerous well-marked trails, there are countless places to unwind on a mindful stroll in Costa Rica. Forest bathing (the art of finding calm among the trees) comes naturally here and you'll soon feel connected to the bountiful nature all around you on a jungle hike.

Don't miss Manuel Antonio National Park to find walking trails that take you past mangrove swamps, tropical plants and up to the Escondido viewpoint where you can look out over the Pacific Ocean. Similarly, as one of Central America's largest lowland tropical rainforests, Corcovado NP allows you to refresh yourself in nature.

At Tenorio Volcano NP, the cloud forest can be explored on foot via the many walking routes. One of the highlights is the hour's hike to



**Taking care, the Costa Rica way** (clockwise from above) Refreshing in a forest; Isla Tortugas; papaya;

the Celeste River and waterfall, where you are led across hanging bridges over a brilliantly blue river to a waterfall cascading into a turquoise pool.

### 5 The beaches

There's nothing much more relaxing than feeling the sand between your toes and with over 300 beaches to choose from in Costa Rica, the only stress will be deciding which stretch of sand to take your shoes and socks off for.

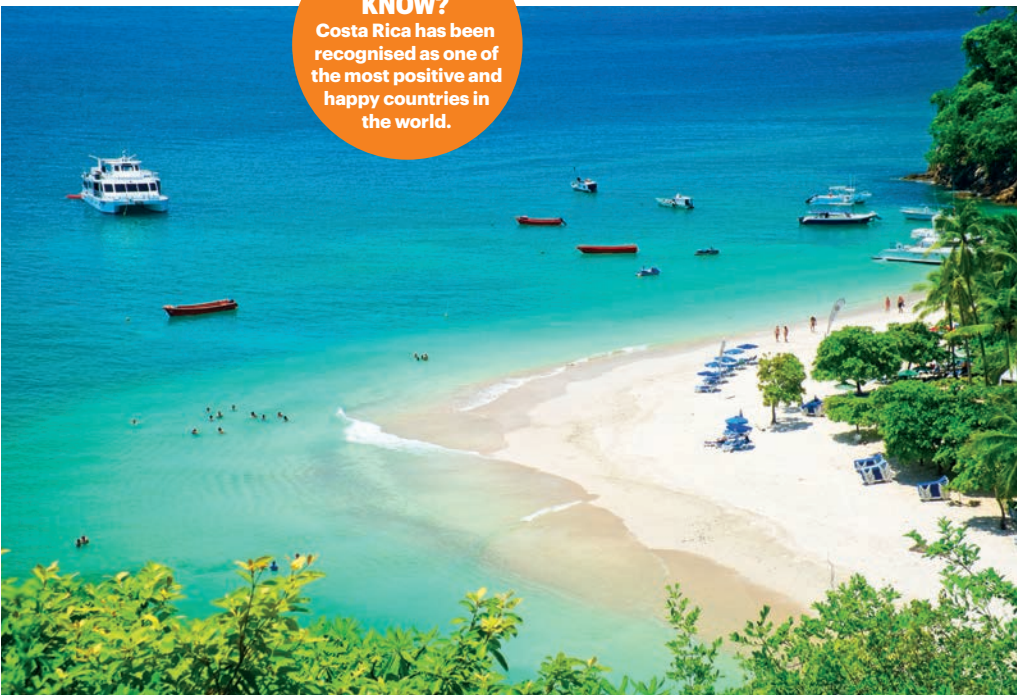
On the Pacific Coast, Guanacaste has been called 'The Golden Coast' thanks to its sunsets. Visitors sit on the beach waiting for that sensational moment when the sky becomes gilded.

Over on the Caribbean side, Punta Uva beach is great for snorkelling with colourful coral just under the surface. A walk along the sand will reveal the laidback atmosphere of this small fishing town.

To really get away from it all, visit the Isla Tortugas, a pair of unspoilt islands on the Nicoya Peninsula. The islands are uninhabited, so in true Costa Rican fashion, nature rules supreme here. ►

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Costa Rica has been recognised as one of the most positive and happy countries in the world.





# PLAN YOUR PERFECT COSTA RICA ESCAPE



## Best for: Luxury and wellness

Audley Travel has specialists who have travelled extensively around Costa Rica and their expert local knowledge is invaluable when it comes to planning your bespoke tour. Audley Travel has designed a number of itinerary ideas to inspire you and they can blend these with your own unique interests to tailor-make the perfect Costa Rica adventure for you. Audley Travel are also on hand to help you while you are in Costa Rica, as their knowledgeable guides will assist you in getting around the country, understanding the culture and getting the most out of your time here.

**Tour operator:** Audley Travel

**Visit:** [audleytravel.com/costa-rica](http://audleytravel.com/costa-rica)

**Phone:** 01993 683115



## Best for: Luxury & wellness

With first-hand experience, a passionate team and over 30 years of experience, Elegant Resorts are leaders in luxury travel. Whether you want to explore the foothills of Arenal Volcano or trek through Manuel Antonio National Park, escape to the golden beaches of the Osa Peninsula and Guanacaste, or seek out cultural experiences in the Central Valley, Elegant Resorts will ensure you do it in style. They work with some of Costa Rica's most luxurious hotels and eco-lodges so that you can have a wild adventure in Costa Rica without compromising on comfort.

**Tour operator:** Elegant Resorts

**Visit:** [elegantresorts.co.uk](http://elegantresorts.co.uk)

**Phone:** 01244 897564



## Best for: Adventure

Fly over jungle canopies by zipwire and gaze at mighty volcanoes on the same day. Seek out sleepy sloths and other amazing creatures in the rainforest while listening out for a chorus of crickets and frogs. Cycle across the Guanacaste plains, La Fortuna National Park and through the foothills of Miravalles Volcano. And if you book with Explore, you can enjoy all of this adventure in a small group of 16 people or less. So not only will you benefit from the expertise of a local guide, you can be sure that your Costa Rican experience will be both an intimate and memorable one.

**Tour operator:** Explore

**Visit:** [explore.co.uk](http://explore.co.uk)

**Phone:** 01252 883761



## Best for: Leisure

Drive from coast to coast on a self-drive tour, stopping for numerous adventures along the way. Seek out monkeys and birds on land, and dolphins and whales on water. Cruise through cloud forests and gaze at active volcanoes. Get lost in San José's fascinating culture or spend your time lying on the golden beaches of the Pacific coast. However you want to spend your time in Costa Rica, you can rely on DialAFly and its 40-plus years of experience to organise you an incredible holiday for a great price.

**Tour operator:** DialAFly

**Visit:** [dialafly.com/flights/centralamerica/costarica](http://dialafly.com/flights/centralamerica/costarica)

**Phone:** 0330 159 6117



## Best for: Adventure

With 11 itineraries in some of the most exhilarating national parks in the country, including Arenal, Manuel Antonio and Tortuguero, Exodus is great if you're after an adventure. Rainforest hikes, cycling, surfing and more are all on offer. What's more, Exodus helps you to do it responsibly, without damaging the environment or disrupting local communities. Exodus works with local guides, restaurants and guest houses to positively impact their communities and to help you get closer to the real Costa Rica.

**Tour operator:** Exodus

**Visit:** [exodus.co.uk](http://exodus.co.uk)

**Phone:** 020 3553 2401



## Best for: Wellness

G Adventures has been leading the way in small group adventure tours for over 30 years and with its diverse Costa Rican itineraries, you're bound to find something suited to you. Whether you want to focus on the classic Costa Rican experience, see some of the country's most incredible wildlife or venture off the well-trodden path, the experts at G Adventures can help. And as G Adventures only use locally-based guides, you will be shown around by someone who knows Costa Rica like the back of their hand.

**Tour operator:** G Adventures

**Visit:** [gadventures.com](http://gadventures.com)

**Phone:** 020 7313 6937



We've hand-selected some of the best and most sustainable tour operators in Costa Rica, so you can make sure that your trip is as good as it possibly can be, and benefits you as well as the locals...



### Best for: Wellness

Europe's leading spa and wellness experts can help you find a journey in Costa Rica like no other. Enjoy activities that connect you to nature such as hiking, wildlife watching, white-water rafting, outdoor yoga and surfing. Taste healthy and locally sourced organic food. Relax in soothing spas and stay in luxurious hotels. There is arguably nowhere better than Costa Rica to switch off from the stresses of daily life. And as Healing Holidays sorts everything from arranging your visa to booking your tours, you can be sure you will be relaxed from day one.

**Tour operator:** Healing Holidays

**Visit:** [healingholidays.com](http://healingholidays.com)

**Phone:** 0207 843 3597



### Best for: Culture

Intrepid Travel has been taken travellers off-the-beaten track to discover the world's most amazing places for over 30 years. If you're seeking an immersive cultural experience in Costa Rica then look no further than Intrepid Travel. Each trip is designed so that you can truly experience local culture by meeting the people, trying authentic food, taking public transport and staying in locally-owned and sustainable accommodation. Intrepid offers an average group size of just ten, so you can benefit from going the local way, exploring places where big groups simply can't go.

**Tour operator:** Intrepid Travel

**Visit:** [intrepidtravel.com](http://intrepidtravel.com)

**Phone:** 0808 274 5111



### Best for: Adventure

One of the best ways to explore Costa Rica's adventurous and wild landscapes is on foot, something you can do with KE Adventure Travel. Its experts will take you on a trek of a lifetime through lush rainforests and misty cloud forests, under incredible waterfalls, to the foot of volcanoes and across golden beaches. By selecting the best local wildlife experts to guide you on your hikes, KE Adventure Travel will ensure you don't miss a single thing along the way. Expect to enjoy sightings of sloths, coatis, tapir, a myriad of birdlife including the elusive quetzal and much more.

**Tour operator:** KE Adventure Travel

**Visit:** [keadventure.com](http://keadventure.com)

**Phone:** 01768 773966



### Best for: All-round

There's so much to choose from in Costa Rica that it can be overwhelming, which is where the experts at Black Tomato come in. Black Tomato first discovered the jungles of Costa Rica in 2005 and the team has struggled to tear themselves away from it ever since. Start by looking through Black Tomato's example itineraries to help you decide what you would like to see and do during your time in Costa Rica. One of Black Tomato's specialists will then tailor, alter and refine your itinerary until it matches your needs completely.

**Tour operator:** Black Tomato

**Visit:** [blacktomato.com](http://blacktomato.com)

**Phone:** 020 7426 9888



### Best for: All-round

From wildlife-watching itineraries and heart-racing holidays to luxurious trips designed to really let you relax and unwind, Journey Latin America can help you make your time in Costa Rica whatever you want it to be. Choose from carefully-curated private and group tours that ensure you go beyond the guidebooks. With all of the hotels, tours and guides expertly selected for you, and with over 40 years of expertise at your fingertips, your Costa Rica holiday is safe in the hands of Journey Latin America.

**Tour operator:** Journey Latin America

**Visit:** [journeylatinamerica.co.uk](http://journeylatinamerica.co.uk)

**Phone:** 020 3553 0261



### Best for: Wildlife and nature

However you want to explore Costa Rica, Latin Routes can help. Its specialists have travelled extensively through Latin America and know the continent like the back of their hands, so they will be able to make great recommendations and plan the perfect itinerary for you. As well as tailor-making truly individual holidays, Latin Routes also operates escorted group tours. These carefully crafted itineraries have passionate expert tour leaders ready to guide you around this spectacular country in the company of other like-minded travellers.

**Tour operator:** Latin Routes

**Visit:** [latinroutes.co.uk](http://latinroutes.co.uk)

**Phone:** 020 8546 6222 ►



# PLAN YOUR PERFECT COSTA RICA ESCAPE



## Best for: Sustainability

Pura Aventura has been offering personally made, planet-friendly and trusted holidays to Latin America since 1999. Pura Aventura's independence, passion and local experience gives it the freedom to create your perfect trip to Costa Rica, whether that's choosing to embark on a road trip to discover Costa Rica's lesser-known highlights or to head into the rainforests to spot wildlife. Alternatively, you may opt to explore Costa Rica's glorious coastal towns. Whatever you choose, you can be sure that you will be staying at eco-friendly hotels and won't be harming the places you visit.

**Tour operator:** Pura Aventura

**Visit:** [pura-aventura.com](http://pura-aventura.com)

**Phone:** 01273 676712



## Best for: All-round

With Select Latin America, you can take your pick from Costa Rica's dense rainforests, rugged mountains, misty cloud forests, refreshing waterfalls or vast stretches of white sandy beaches. Choose to go head-first into adventure by ziplining and white-water rafting or take it slow with wildlife hikes and beach-side yoga sessions. Select Latin America will individually design your Costa Rican adventure for you, so you can make sure all of your personal highlights are ticked off while benefiting from friendly experts. You can rely on their un-biased knowledge, advice and inspiration.

**Tour operator:** Select Latin America

**Visit:** [selectlatinamerica.co.uk](http://selectlatinamerica.co.uk)

**Phone:** 020 7407 1478



## Best for: Leisure

TravelBag has been curating trips all around the world since 1979, so its experts know a thing or two about creating unforgettable travel experiences. Whatever you want to do while you're in Costa Rica, the experts at TravelBag will help you to create a tailor-made itinerary. TravelBag has sought out incredible places to stay all over Costa Rica so, whether you spend your days at the beaches of Puerto Viejo or exploring the Arenal National Park, you will be safe in the knowledge that you'll have a comfortable and welcoming retreat to return to after your long days.

**Tour operator:** TravelBag

**Visit:** [travelbag.co.uk](http://travelbag.co.uk)

**Phone:** 020 3733 1799



## Best for: Sustainability

Pioneers in responsible travel, Rainbow Tours can help you to uncover Costa Rica's famous icons and its hidden corners, where you will get right to the heart of the local culture. Whether you want a custom-made trips for couples, a family holiday or an expert-led group trip, the experts at Rainbow Tours can help. What's more, Rainbow Tours takes looking after the planet seriously, so you can be sure that your trip will be a sustainable one that not only protects Costa Rica's natural environment but gives back to the local communities.

**Tour operator:** Rainbow Tours

**Visit:** [rainbowtours.co.uk](http://rainbowtours.co.uk)

**Phone:** 020 8131 5603



## Best for: Adventure

The experts at Trailfinders have spent the last 50 years tailor-making incredible holidays for over 16 million clients. Trailfinders offers a range of holidays to Costa Rica and has a dedicated team of specialists who are a mine of information about what to do in this incredible country, often with first-hand travel experience. Whether you want to explore Costa Rica with your own private driver, embark on a fly drive, or are simply looking for advice on the best national parks to visit, they will be more than happy to help.

**Tour operator:** Trailfinders

**Visit:** [trailfinders.com](http://trailfinders.com)

**Phone:** 020 7084 6518



## Best for: Nature and Wildlife

With over 25 years of experience in creating outstanding wildlife holidays around the globe, you can trust Wildlife Worldwide to create a wildlife adventure through Costa Rica like no other. Whether you want to see turtles laying their eggs, hear the call of howler monkeys or watch toucans brighten up the forest, it has a tour to match and can build you the perfect tailor-made trip. Wildlife Worldwide offers trips to Costa Rica's lesser-known national parks such as Carara and Cahuita, allowing you to truly escape the crowds.

**Tour operator:** Wildlife Worldwide

**Visit:** [wildlifeworldwide.com](http://wildlifeworldwide.com)

**Phone:** 01962 302086





## HOW MANY HAVE YOU TICKED OFF?

### ADVENTURE

- ☐ 1 Conquer the rapids
- ☐ 2 Fly through the trees
- ☐ 3 Swim with sharks
- ☐ 4 Gaze in awe at the volcanoes
- ☐ 5 Trek the jungle

### SUSTAINABILITY

- ☐ 1 Stay in an eco-lodge
- ☐ 2 Volunteer your time
- ☐ 3 Eat at an eco-farm
- ☐ 4 Protect the wild
- ☐ 5 Take the Pura Vida Pledge

### NATURE & WILDLIFE

- ☐ 1 Go wild in the jungle
- ☐ 2 Spot monkeys
- ☐ 3 See turtles nesting
- ☐ 4 Go birdwatching
- ☐ 5 Go diving or snorkelling

### CULTURE

- ☐ 1 Get a caffeine fix
- ☐ 2 Experience cowboy culture
- ☐ 3 Meet the Bri Bri
- ☐ 4 See how chocolate is made
- ☐ 5 Eat traditional food

### WELLBEING

- ☐ 1 Take a yoga class
- ☐ 2 Eat farm-to-table food
- ☐ 3 Soak in the hot springs
- ☐ 4 Go forest bathing
- ☐ 5 Relax on the beaches





## FIND YOURSELF IN COSTA RICA WITH EUROPE'S LEADING WELLNESS EXPERT

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Healing  Holidays

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