



Grand Tour of Costa Rica: From the Caribbean to the Pacific

13 days | 15 days with Rincón de la Vieja extension

Costa Rica's centuries upon centuries of history? Grand. The country's dedication to preserving its natural habitats? Grand. No matter how you look at it, Costa Rica smashes expectations—and now, we gave it a Grand Tour to match. For almost two weeks, you'll zip across this Central American wonderland, stopping in the former capital of Cartago; exploring the pristine cloud forests of Turrialba; and supporting the eco-tourism efforts of organizations like the Toucan Rescue Ranch. You'll meet Ticos (a nickname Costa Ricans go by) from Puerto Viejo de Talamanca on the Caribbean to the Guanacaste coast on the Pacific, and pick up their appreciation for la pura vida with each stop you make.



Your tour package includes

- 12 nights in handpicked hotels
- 12 breakfasts
- 4 lunches
- 4 dinners with beer or wine
- 2 tastings
- 12 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach

Included highlights

- Coffee plantation tour & tasting
- Toucan Rescue Ranch
- Irazú Volcano National Park
- Tree planting project
- Guayabo National Monument
- Afro-Caribbean drum & salsa lesson
- Sarapiquí organic pineapple farm
- Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge
- Tirimbina Biological Reserve
- Farm-to-table lunch
- Tenorio Volcano National Park
- Guanacaste beaches

Tour pace

On this tour, you'll walk for about 2.5 hours daily across moderately uneven terrain, including paved roads, unpaved trails, and muddy paths, with some hills.

Group size

12-22

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San José Region → 2 nights

Day 1: Arrival in San José

Included meals: light dinner

Welcome to Costa Rica! Touch down in San José and transfer to your hotel. Settle in, then meet your group in the evening over a light dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

Please note: If you arrive after 9pm, dinner will be served in your hotel room.

Day 2: Coffee farm visit & Toucan Rescue Ranch

Included meals: breakfast, tasting, welcome lunch

Make your way from your hotel to a local farm and discover one of Costa Rica's finest exports—coffee. Regarded as some of the best in the world thanks to a Goldilocks combination of growing conditions, Costa Rican coffee accounts for close to 8% of the country's gross domestic product.

- Tour a family-owned estate to learn how coffee cherries yield coffee beans, and how those pips—after a multi-step process of cleaning and roasting—eventually become the flavorful drink in your mug each morning.
- Learn how the estate protects and preserves the biodiversity of the area, and how it employs traditional methods to cultivate its crop.
- Indulge in a tasting of some of the farm's coffees, then sit down to a welcome lunch and continue getting to know your fellow travelers.

Afterward, continue on to the Toucan Rescue Ranch. Dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of native wildlife, this nonprofit organization looks after toucans, sloths, and other animals. Join a rancher for a guided walk of the grounds, hear the stories of the various creatures in their care, and come to a better understanding of the importance of conservation in Costa Rica.

What better way to get to know authentic Costa Rica than through its traditional food and dance? Kick up your heels with an optional excursion that highlights the local folklore. Or, if you'd prefer, use your free time this evening to explore some of San José's modern and colonial architecture.

+ Costa Rican Folklore Dinner

Turrialba Region → 2 nights

Day 3: Turrialba Region via Cartago & Irazú Volcano National Park

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Today, journey to the 16th-century city of Cartago—the first colonial settlement successfully established on Costa Rican soil. Upon arrival, join your Tour Director for some guided sightseeing.

- Visit the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, a uniquely designed Roman Catholic basilica that combines both colonial and Byzantine elements. Built in 1639, it predates the founding of Costa Rica by almost 200 years.
- Explore the Santiago Apóstol Parish Ruins—a half-completed, 150-year-old church that now anchors a public park—and end with a walk through the bustling Central Market.
- Make your way through the Central Valley, Costa Rica's stunning heartland, to Irazú Volcano National Park. Then, set off for a leisurely trail walk around its namesake attraction. Called "El Coloso," or "The Colossus," by the locals, Irazú towers over 11,000 feet above sea level, making it the tallest active volcano in the country.
- Stop at viewing platforms to soak in the beauty of the volcano's massive main crater and the brilliant green lagoon at its center.

Continue to your hotel in the Turrialba region, an area known for its pre-Columbian ruins, volcanic activity, and beautiful rural countryside. After settling into your hotel, sit down with your group for an included dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

Day 4: Tree planting reforestation project

Included meals: breakfast

Costa Rica has tirelessly worked on reforestation projects and environmental conservation in an effort to reverse the mass deforestation activity from 1940 to 1989, which resulted in the loss of half of their mature forests. Today you'll have the opportunity to take part in planting native species of trees in partnership with a local organization dedicated to revitalizing the country's forests.

Please note: Travelers should wear clothes that they don't mind getting dirty during today's activity.

You don't have to have a sweet tooth to join the optional excursion to a cacao-producing farm. You'll tour the family-owned property to learn about the harvest, enjoy a fresh, farm-to-table lunch, and, of course, a hands-on opportunity to craft your own chocolate delights. Alternatively, use your free afternoon to visit local markets to shop for handicrafts or pack a lunch and head toward one of the area's manicured parks such as the CATIE Botanical Garden.

+ Turrialba Chocolate Workshop & Lunch

Puerto Viejo de Talamanca → 2 nights

Day 5: Transfer to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

As you make your way to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca, stop at the mysterious Guayabo National Monument—a significant archaeological site containing ancient ruins—to learn more about the area's pre-Columbian history. (And there's plenty of history to take in: First discovered in the 1800s as the land was cleared for coffee cultivation, the site dates back more than 3,000 years.)

- Examine the remnants of an early Costa Rican civilization—petroglyphs, tombs, and impressively engineered infrastructure—only a fraction of the wonders that still lay hidden in the fertile rainforest soil.
- Hear from your Tour Director how, once upon a time, this site may have been a key regional center. Founded in 1000 B.C., it abruptly fell in 1400 A.D., when its inhabitants abandoned it for reasons that remain unknown to modern archaeologists.

Continue to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca, a town on the shores of the Caribbean Sea, where you'll meet with locals who will introduce you to their culture and musical traditions.

- Find out how salsa, Costa Rica's most popular dance, was introduced to the country. Then, hit the dance floor to learn some basic steps and spins to the tune of traditional salsa music.

- Trace the roots of Afro-Caribbean music back to West and Central Africa and discover how it arrived in Latin America via the transatlantic slave trade. Then, play some beats of your own during a hands-on drum lesson.

Tonight, gather with your group for an included dinner, served with your choice of beer or rum punch.

Day 6: Free day in Puerto Viejo de Talamanca

Included meals: breakfast

Use your free day today to head to one of the nearby beaches like Playa Cocles or Punta Uva for surfing or snorkeling—you can always ask your Tour Director for a great recommendation—or join an immersive optional excursion to the Salamanca Mountains. Here, you'll get to immerse yourself in the culture of one of Costa Rica's indigenous peoples—the Bribri.

+ Bribri Indigenous Village & Lunch

Sarapiquí Region → 2 nights

Day 7: Transfer to Sarapiquí Region & pineapple farm visit

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, tasting

Head back north to the Sarapiquí Region, an important ecotourism destination replete with lush nature preserves, thriving wildlife, and flourishing farms. Upon arrival, savor an included lunch before visiting an organic pineapple plantation and learning about sustainable and eco-friendly practices unique to the area.

- Climb aboard a tractor for a guided tour of the farm and its sprawling fields.
- Learn how the farmers grow pineapples using eco-friendly methods, like compost fertilization and crop rotation, and why they use natural herbicides to protect their harvest.
- Nibble on freshly sliced pineapple and sip fresh juice or a homemade piña colada. (You can enjoy yours virgin or with an added splash of rum.)

Transfer to your hotel and enjoy free time for the rest of the day to relax or explore the area.

Day 8: Caño Negro cruise

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Today, head towards the Nicaraguan border and

disembark at the Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge. Encompassing an area of over 25,000 acres, this wetland preserve plays a key role in the annual migration of birds like storks, ibis, and cormorants.

- Hop aboard a boat with an expert guide and set off through the wetlands, keeping an eye out for endangered species like the anhinga bird, the guapote fish, jaguars, and the emerald basilisk.
- Cruise the peaceful Caño Negro wetlands as your guide points out some of the 200 bird species that call the refuge home, as well as the other flora and fauna that populate its rainforests and pastures.

Later, enjoy an included lunch at a local restaurant before enjoying free time in the Sarapiquí Region for the rest of the day.

Arenal Region → 2 nights

Day 9: Arenal Region via Tirimbina Biological Reserve

Included meals: breakfast

Before departing the Sarapiquí Region, head to the 850-acre Tirimbina Biological Reserve for a morning walking tour. Classed by the Costa Rican government as a Private National Wildlife Refuge, this nonprofit organization conducts environmental research and stresses the importance of conservation.

- With a naturalist guide, set out along part of Tirimbina's nine-kilometer (5.6 mile) trail network. Learn how the reserve was specifically created as an eco-lodge and research station, and why it provides free environmental education to local communities.
- Spot toucans, howler monkeys, sloths, and more wildlife as you walk. Then, cross over the longest suspension bridge in Costa Rica, spanning a 650-foot gap over the Sarapiquí River below for a heart-stopping view of the rainforest canopy.

Continue to the Arenal Region, a place known for its dazzling volcano, ample hiking trails, rushing waterfalls, and beautiful scenery. Soak the day away in hot springs kept warm by the Arenal Volcano on an optional excursion that includes dinner with volcano views, naturally. Prefer to spend the free evening on your own? Ask your Tour Director about any local festivals or cultural events happening during your stay, or wait for nightfall and enjoy epic stargazing—the Arenal area is known for its dark skies and celestial views.

+ Arenal Hot Springs & Dinner

Day 10: Free morning & farm visit

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Enjoy a free morning to explore the Arenal Region at your own pace, or add an optional excursion to get even closer to the iconic Arenal Volcano, this time from Lake Arenal. Board a kayak and join your guide for a paddle through magical coves and lagoons as wildlife hums all around you.

This afternoon, visit an eco-friendly farm in La Fortuna, a picturesque town with a jaw-dropping view of the Arenal Volcano, for an included lunch.

- Dig into a farm-to-table meal, created using fresh ingredients harvested onsite as well as local dairy products.
- Explore the grounds with a guide and learn how it became the first carbon-negative community of its kind in Costa Rica.

+ Kayaking in Arenal Volcano National Park

Guanacaste Coast → 2 nights

Day 11: Guanacaste Coast via Tenorio Volcano National Park

Included meals: breakfast

Continue through the country's volcano region and set out on a guided walk through Tenorio Volcano National Park. The nearly 5,000-square-mile park boasts astounding biodiversity within its rainforests, such as white-faced monkeys, pumas, orchids, palm trees, and other flora and fauna.

- Join your Tour Director for a walk along the milky blue Rio Celeste, and see where two mineral-rich volcanic streams come together to give the river its distinctive turquoise color.
- View the famous—and powerful—Rio Celeste waterfall from above, or walk down a series of stairs for a closer look from a dedicated viewpoint.

Settle into your hotel on the Guanacaste coast: a mecca for surfers, hikers, and sunbathers that's home to some of Costa Rica's most sought-after beaches and landscapes.

Day 12: Free day on the Guanacaste Coast

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner

Spend a free day relaxing along the Guanacaste coast or add an excursion to log some time on—and in—its gorgeous waters.

This evening, celebrate your trip with your fellow travelers at a farewell dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

+ Guanacaste Sailing & Snorkeling with Lunch

Flight Home

Day 13: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the Liberia airport for your flight home, or experience an unexpectedly different side of Costa Rica by extending your trip to Rincón de la Vieja where Costa Rica's northeastern region can continue to enchant you with an unparalleled landscape, inviting hot springs, and a resort stay you won't want to leave.

+ Rincón de la Vieja extension

Rincón de la Vieja draws its name from an old local story—and with a legendary landscape worthy of World Heritage Site status, it's no wonder it does. Spend two rejuvenating days here, roaming its volcanic terrain and unwinding in its hot springs, before heading back to a resort each night. (It'll be time to fly back home before you know it.)

Rincón de la Vieja → 2 nights

Day 13: Transfer to Rincón de la Vieja & walking tour

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Nestled in the northeastern corner of the country, Rincón de la Vieja National Park makes up part of the UNESCO-protected Area de Conservación Guanacaste. Home to tropical dry forest, a pair of volcanoes, and plenty of rare plants and vulnerable animal species, it's a natural haven unlike any other found in Costa Rica.

Travel to the park this morning, where you'll embark on a guided walk. Follow your leader and keep a keen eye out for waterfalls, streams, and the wildlife they'll point out—animals like kinkajous, pumas, and tapirs. Your hike will also take you past captivating volcanic landscapes that bubble and pulse with mud pots and fumaroles.

After exploring Rincón de la Vieja, transfer to your hotel and sit down for an included lunch and a chance to freshen up. Reconvene in the evening for an included dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

Please note: Today's activities may take place on day 14, if need be.

Day 14: Rio Negro Hot Springs

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner

Ease into the day with a free morning before visiting the Rio Negro Hot Springs, a thermal pool complex warmed by the intense activity of Rincón de la Vieja's volcanoes. Spend the afternoon relaxing, soaking in both mineral-rich waters and peaceful river views, before returning to your hotel.

This evening, enjoy a farewell dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine, as you celebrate your trip with your fellow group members.

Please note: Today's activities may take place on day 13, if need be.

Flight Home

Day 15: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the Liberia airport for your flight home.

Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: goaheadtours.ca/CRG | 1-800-754-5066

Day 2: Costa Rican Folklore Dinner

\$129CAD/\$139CAD* (4 hours, departs in the evening, includes dinner)

Travel into the lush hills above San José for an evening of Costa Rican folklore, brought to life with live music and regional dances. Enjoy a buffet dinner of traditional foods, served with a complimentary glass of rum punch, while taking in beautiful views of the city below. Then, learn a new-to-you dance step or two, and test them out to the tune of a live band.

Day 4: Turrialba Chocolate Workshop & Lunch

\$105CAD/\$115CAD* (4 hours, departs in the afternoon, includes lunch)

The fertile lands of Costa Rica's Turrialba region yield coffee, sugarcane, macadamia nuts, and other agricultural goodies—including cacao. On this excursion, you'll spend an afternoon on a family-owned farm. Begin with a farm-to-table lunch, followed by a tour of the land: Discover how farmers used cacao, banana, and citrus trees to transform a deforested pasture into a thriving tropical grove, and learn about cacao's history from those who work with the crop daily. From there, visit the post-harvest center for a behind-the-scenes look at how pods are separated, fermented, dried, and stored. Wrap up with a hands-on workshop, where you'll take freshly roasted beans and make your own chocolatey treats.

Day 6: Bribri Indigenous Village & Lunch

\$119CAD/\$129CAD* (6 hours, departs in the morning, includes lunch)

Costa Rica is home to eight indigenous peoples. The largest of these—the Bribri—live in the Talamanca Mountains, and on this excursion, you'll immerse yourself in their culture. Begin by meeting a local guide in the village of Meleruk, and set off with your group on a short walk through nearby woods and fields. Listen as you learn about the community's way of life, their use of medicinal plants, and their unique building practices. You'll also discover the significance of cacao: For the Bribri, it plays a central role in sacred traditions, healing, and their livelihoods. After your walk, take in a chocolate-making demonstration (and buy some of your own, if you'd like). Finish by joining a Bribri family for a traditional homemade lunch, and gain an even deeper understanding of their ancestral customs before returning to your hotel in Puerto Viejo.

Day 9: Arenal Hot Springs & Dinner

\$129CAD/\$139CAD* (5 hours, departs in the afternoon with dinner)

The afternoon is yours to explore an array of heated pools, kept warm by geothermal activity surrounding the Arenal Volcano. Then, enjoy dinner, along with views of the volcano, at a restaurant in the charming town of La Fortuna before traveling back to your hotel.

Day 10: Kayaking in Arenal Volcano National Park

\$65CAD/\$75CAD* (2 hours, departs in the morning)

Sitting at the base of Arenal Volcano, Lake Arenal offers some of the best views of the magnificent volcano.

Meet up with a naturalist guide and board your kayak for a leisurely paddle along the shoreline of Central America's largest lake. You'll explore coves, lagoons, and outlets while keeping an eye out for birds like kingfishers and flycatchers. Be sure to listen for howler monkeys that hang out in the trees around the lake.

Day 12: Guanacaste Sailing & Snorkeling with Lunch

\$165CAD/\$175CAD* (4 hours, departs in the morning)

Cruise along one of Costa Rica's most scenic areas during a sailing and snorkeling tour of the Guanacaste coast. Relax on the sailboat as you get a new perspective on the unspoiled coastline and try to spot humpback whales, dolphins, manta rays, sea turtles, and more. Stop to swim and snorkel among tropical fish in the warm Pacific water, and then reward your efforts with a gourmet lunch prepared right on board. Please note: This excursion is weather-dependent.

*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at goaheadtours.ca/terms