



# Costa Rica: Rainforests, Volcanoes & Wildlife

9 days | 12 days with Manuel Antonio & San José extension

With landscapes ranging from misty cloud forests to sun-kissed beaches, this small, Central American nation packs a mighty punch when it comes to stunning natural scenery and awe-inspiring wildlife. On this small group Adventure Tour, take it all in as you cruise along Tortuguero's picturesque rainforest canal, soak in natural hot springs at the foot of imposing Arenal Volcano, and explore Monteverde's otherworldly cloud forests. Along the way, get a taste of Costa Rican food and culture through the country's warm and welcoming locals.



## Your tour package includes

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

## Included highlights

- Tortuguero National Park
- Arenal Volcano National Park hike
- Organic pineapple farm
- Heliconia Ranch
- Coffee & cocoa plantation
- Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve & tree planting
- Wildlife Sanctuary visit

## Tour pace

On this guided 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 → 1 night

### Day 1: Arrival in San José

*Included meals: light dinner*

Fly to Costa Rica and settle in at your hotel in San José. Enjoy a light dinner this evening.

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

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## Tortuguero → 2 nights

### Day 2: Transfer to Tortuguero

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, welcome dinner*

Get comfortable on your group's private coach and follow the scenic Guapiles Highway through Braulio Carrillo National Park. This vast, protected area features rugged mountains, lush forests, extinct volcanoes, and pristine waterfalls and rivers. Then, climb aboard a boat bound for your eco-lodge in Tortuguero. As you cruise along the Sucio River, keep your eyes peeled for caimans, a reptile similar to alligators, lurking below the surface. You might also spot crested Jesus Christ lizards, named for their ability to run atop water—upright, on their hind legs! Enjoy an included lunch at your eco-lodge in Tortuguero, then get settled in your room. Later, get to know your group during a welcome dinner served with beer or wine at your eco-lodge.

**Travel tip:** From July through September, you can book a guided evening beach walk through your Tour Director for an additional cost. During the walk, you'll learn about the threats facing green sea turtles, whose global population has declined, and observe them in their natural habitat.

Why seeing green sea turtles here is special: Tortuguero is home to one of the world's largest green sea turtle nesting populations, with 30,000 females nesting here per season on average.

### Day 3: Walking & boating tour of Tortuguero National Park

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

This morning, get to know Tortuguero National Park on a guided tour. Situated along the Caribbean coast, the expansive park is home to one of Central America's largest remaining tropical rainforests.

- Learn about the park's diverse habitats, including mangrove forests, swamps, and beaches, on a walk led by your naturalist guide
- Board an open-top boat (ideal for peering into Tortuguero's tall trees) and cruise through the park. It's early in the day, so keep a lookout for nocturnal animals who are still stirring, and diurnal animals for whom the day is just beginning. Wildlife to watch for: caimans, toucans, green macaws, and howler, spider, and white-face monkeys
- Float along the park's freshwater creeks and placid lagoons, which are home to endangered turtles and more than 50 species of fish
- Enjoy an included lunch featuring simple yet flavorful local cuisine, such as rice, beans, and plantains

Spend a free afternoon in Tortuguero or add an excursion.

Sit down for an included dinner of traditional Costa Rican food, served with beer or wine, at your eco-lodge in Tortuguero.

+ Tortuguero National Park: Rainforest Kayaking Tour

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## Arenal Region → 2 nights

### Day 4: Arenal Region via organic pineapple farm & salsa dancing class

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, tasting*

Journey by boat through Tortuguero National Park's jungle canals. Then, continue by bus to the Arenal region, making stops along the way.

- Sit down at a local restaurant for a family-style, Costa Rican lunch
- Spend the afternoon exploring an organic pineapple farm in the Sarapiquí region and learning what makes its sustainable and eco-friendly practices unique to the area
- Climb aboard a tractor for a guided tour of the farm and its sprawling pineapple fields

- Learn how the farmers grow pineapples using eco-friendly methods, such as compost fertilization, natural herbicides, and crop rotation
- Nibble on just-cut pineapple and sip fresh pineapple juice or a homemade piña colada (enjoy yours virgin or with an added splash of rum)

Check in to your Arenal Region hotel and enjoy free time for dinner. This evening, trade your hiking boots for dancing shoes and meet with a local salsa instructor in a private studio in Arenal. Find out how Costa Rica's most popular dance was introduced to the country, then hit the dance floor for a lesson in basic steps and spins set to traditional salsa music.

### Day 5: Hiking tour of Arenal National Park & ranch visit

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch*

Join your Tour Director for a guided hike through Arenal Volcano National Park, named for the nearly 5,500-foot-high volcano that towers over the pastures and hillsides that surround it. Though Arenal hasn't erupted since 2010, you might still spot steam snaking skyward from its caldera.

- Marvel at the mile-high volcano, a near-perfect conical shape that emerges from the Sierra de Tilarán mountain range

**Travel tip:** During Costa Rica's rainy season, which lasts from May through November, clouds and mist can obscure the volcano's peak from view.

- Try to spot slow-moving sloths, snakes coiled around tree limbs, and spiders resting in their webs
- Gaze at placid Lake Arenal—Costa Rica's largest lake—and watch for birds such as northern jacanas, woodpeckers, and kingfishers, wading and soaring along its shores

*Please note: In some places around the park, terrain can be uneven and formed by hardened lava. Travelers should be able to navigate these surfaces and hike for around two miles.*

This afternoon, visit an eco-friendly ranch in La Fortuna.

- Enjoy a farm-to-table lunch featuring fresh ingredients harvested on-site, as well as local dairy products

- Explore the ranch with a local guide, and learn how it became the first carbon-negative community of its kind in Costa Rica
- Learn how sugar cane is harvested followed by a tasting of sugar cane products

Spend a free evening in the Arenal region or add an excursion.

+ Arenal Hot Springs & Dinner

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## Monteverde → 2 nights

### Day 6: Monteverde via Heliconia Ranch, coffee & cocoa tastings

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, tasting*

Start your journey to Monteverde with a boat ride across Lake Arenal, spotting iguanas and birds as you cruise along. Then, enjoy dramatic mountain, valley, and cloud forest views as you make your way to Heliconia Ranch aboard your coach.

- Talk with a rancher to find out what circumstances have led to deforestation in Costa Rica
- Enjoy lunch at the ranch, with dishes featuring lamb, chicken, rice, beans, coffee, and other items and ingredients grown or produced on-site
- Watch traditional Costa Rican dances performed by the ranch's staff

This afternoon, head to a nearby coffee plantation to learn about the history and production of coffee, as well as chocolate and sugarcane, in Costa Rica.

- Get to know different kinds of coffee beans and roasting techniques, and sample a freshly brewed cup made from the plantation's own beans
- Discover how cocoa is cultivated and transformed into various types of chocolate treats
- Try your hand at making drinking chocolate, and sample ready-to-eat chocolate made on-site

### Day 7: Hiking tour of Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve & tree planting

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Join your Tour Director for a hike through Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve, a haven for birdwatchers. Be on the lookout for 30 hummingbird species, as well as toucans, great green macaws, three-wattled bellbirds, resplendent quetzals, black-faced solitaires, and other hard-to-spot bird species.

- Learn about, and keep a lookout for, the forest's array of flora and fauna, including orchids, ferns, millipedes, tarantulas, and more
- Walk through the misty forest as you explore this rare ecosystem, which gets its name from the constant cloud coverage
- Hear about the area's reforestation efforts and have the opportunity to make your own contribution by planting a native tree in the Cloud Forest

*Please note: Travelers should be able to hike around two miles over wet, and potentially slippery, pathways.*

Enjoy free time in the Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve or Monteverde, or add an excursion. Later, head to a local restaurant for an included dinner served with beer or wine.

+ Sky Walk

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## San José → 1 night

### Day 8: San José via wildlife sanctuary

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner*

Travel to San José, stopping along the way to tour a wildlife sanctuary

- Learn about the company's mission to rescue, rehabilitate, and release Costa Rican wildlife
- Set off on a walk around the property with a local guide to see jaguars, ocelots, monkeys, tapirs, white-tailed deer, and macaws
- Discover the importance of conservation in Costa Rica as you hear the stories of how the animals arrived at the ranch

Head to a local restaurant to enjoy live music, dancing, and scenic vistas as you celebrate your trip during a farewell dinner.

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## Flight Home

### Day 9: Departure

*Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)*

Transfer to the airport for your flight home or extend your stay in Costa Rica to explore Manuel Antonio.

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## + Manuel Antonio & San José extension

When it comes to viewing wildlife, few places on the planet can compare to Manuel Antonio National Park—a roughly 1,700-acre preserve

where lush, tropical forest, white-sand beaches, and turquoise sea meet. Discover the park's staggering biodiversity, then head to tranquil Tárcoles for a boat ride along its namesake river, where crocodiles are sure to catch your eye.

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## Manuel Antonio → 2 nights

### Day 9: Manuel Antonio National Park

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Make your way south, to Manuel Antonio National Park, which is noteworthy for its unspoiled beaches, scenic hiking trails, and practically unparalleled biodiversity. Get to know the park, and its plant and animal inhabitants, on a guided tour.

- Keep an eye out for some of the park's hundred-plus species of animals. They include squirrel monkeys, a species that's endemic to the park and dwindling in numbers
- Walk to the top of rocky Cathedral Point to take in views of the park from across the Pacific
- Watch the blowhole at Escondido Beach blast water into the air during high tide
- Marvel at the towering sea cliffs and mysterious caves of Serrucho Point
- Relax on the beach, take a dip in the Pacific Ocean—or both

Sit down this evening for an included dinner served with beer or wine.

### Day 10: Free day in Manuel Antonio

*Included meals: breakfast*

Spend a free day in Manuel Antonio—perhaps relaxing on a beach, watching for sloths and other wildlife along a nature trail, or snorkeling among coral reefs offshore—or add an excursion.

+ Manuel Antonio Catamaran Cruise

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## San José → 1 night

### Day 11: Tárcoles River cruise & transfer to San José

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner*

Travel to the quiet town of Tárcoles. Climb aboard a boat for a guided tour of the Tárcoles River, which is known for the large numbers of American crocodiles that inhabit its waters.

- Soak in views of lush mangrove forests and jungle scenery

- Look out for crocodiles, as well as iguanas, lizards, monkeys, and birds

This afternoon, travel back to San José and sit down for an included farewell dinner, served with beer or wine, at a local restaurant.

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## **Flight Home**

### **Day 12: Departure**

*Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)*

Transfer to the 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.com/CRP](https://goaheadtours.com/CRP) | 1-800-597-0350

## Day 3: Tortuguero National Park: Rainforest

### Kayaking Tour

\$55/\$65\* (2 hours, departs in the afternoon)

Tortuguero National Park is known for its serene network of canals that wind through the tropical rainforest. The best way to explore these waterways? By kayak, of course! Take a boat to the local ranger station to meet up with a naturalist guide and board your kayak, which is specially designed to navigate the waterways. You'll paddle through natural canals, lagoons, and hidden coves while learning about the lush flora and fauna found in the rainforest. Keep your eyes peeled for wildlife, like river otters and manatees, and admire the scenery as you paddle to portions of the park only accessible by kayak. After your tour, travel back to your hotel by boat.

## Day 5: Arenal Hot Springs & Dinner

\$95/\$105\* (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 7: Sky Walk

\$65/\$75\* (time length varies, departure time varies)

The canopy layer of the Costa Rican rainforest teems with life, but until recently, it was difficult for travelers to enter this world. On today's excursion, a guided tour brings you to a series of suspended bridges high above the floor of the Monteverde cloud forest.

## Extension excursion options

### Day 10: Manuel Antonio Catamaran Cruise

\$115/\$125\* (3 hours, departure time varies)

Spend the afternoon cruising along the central Pacific coast of Quepos on board the Ocean King catamaran, the largest in Central America. Sail through the various islands and rock formations as you explore Manuel Antonio National Park from the water, keeping an eye out for dolphins and sea birds that inhabit the area. Snorkel in the calm turquoise waters as you explore the underwater beauty up close. Please note: This excursion is weather-dependent and will run in the afternoon from January to March and in the morning from April through mid-December.

\*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.com/terms](https://goaheadtours.com/terms)