



COLOURS OF COSTA RICA

Go Beyond Tour | 15 Days | Physical Level 1

San Jose - Tortuguero - Arenal - Monteverde - Manuel Antonio

One of the planet's most biodiverse destinations and a poster child for eco-tourism, Costa Rica is a colourful, peaceful and bountiful country. From the tropical beaches to lush rainforest, you will explore this natural paradise, spending time in breath-taking national parks, viewing volcanoes and meeting the friendly local people.

- Discover the jungle and waterways of Tortuguero
- Walk the trails of Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve
- Visit the symmetrical cone-shaped volcano of Arenal
- Taste 'heart of palm' while stopping in Sarapiquí
- Enjoy magnificent views of Nicoya Gulf enroute to Manuel Antonio
- Experience the many highlights that San Jose has to offer

TOUR MAP



COLOURS OF COSTA RICA TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as specified
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

GO BEYOND TOURS:

Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime.

These tours include:

- Walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

The cost of your tour includes most meals, however on occasion you will have the opportunity for some free time around meal times to experience the local restaurants for yourself. At these times meals will be at your own expense. The meals which are included in your tour are clearly stated on each individual day of the itinerary below.

Our Latin America tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of this continent on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. We are sure you will have a wonderful time - prepare to be immersed in the authentic charm of the countries you will visit.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights. Colours of Costa Rica is rated as a physical level 1 tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time

Of course, our National Escort and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more Information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 15 days in duration including overnight international flights in both directions as this is the most likely flight option from Australia.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours. Please email your international flight times to info@wendywutours.com.au so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 1 in San Jose and end the tour on Day 13 in San Jose. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure. An informal Welcome Dinner will be held on Day 1 of the itinerary.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It's our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we'll make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Travel to Costa Rica

Meals: D

Fly to San José, Costa Rica's capital, where you will be met at the airport and transferred approximately 45 minutes to your hotel in Santa Ana. The rest of the day is yours to start soaking up the local culture. Tonight, you will enjoy a welcome dinner.



Destination Information

San Jose – Located in the centre of the country, San Jose is the most important political, economic and social centre of the Costa Rica territory. It can be considered, almost in its entirety, to have a complete European cultural influence.

Day 2: San Jose

Meals: B, L

This morning, get to know San Jose by exploring the main streets, theatres, museums and downtown neighbourhoods for 2 hours. After this, head to the outskirts of the city (20-minute drive), to the town of Escazu where vestiges of the colonial lifestyle still can be found on every corner. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, visit a local artisan to learn about the traditional "mascaradas" and finish your visit at a sugar cane mill. The afternoon touring will last about 2 hours.



Day 3: San Jose to Tortuguero

Meals: B, L, D

Today you travel for approximately 2 hours, through Braulio Carrillo National Park and across rural agriculture towns, made up of banana and cocoa plantations. You will embark on a boat, taking you across rivers to the beautiful jungle area of Tortuguero. This boat trip is 1.5 – 2 hours depending on the water level.



Lunch will be served at the hotel, and later that afternoon a local elder will meet you at the hotel, giving you an introduction about the history of the area and its change from a lumberjack town into one of the most important wildlife protection areas in the country. Approximately 1hr in duration.

The rest of the day is at leisure and dinner is served at the hotel.

Between January – April if the water levels are too low, the main dock cannot be used. You will then be transferred to a secondary dock, 45 – 60 minutes drive away.

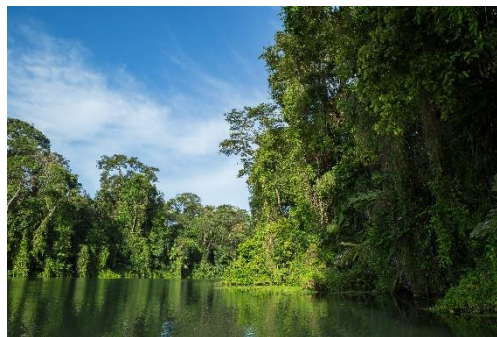
Destination Information

Tortuguero – A village located on the vibrant Caribbean coast and one of the most unique areas of Costa Rica. The National Park is home to a network of canals, dense rainforests, rivers, lagoons and beaches and both the town and Tortuguero National Park are named after marine turtles (Tortuguero means bunch of turtles).

Day 4: Tortuguero

Meals: B, L, D

You will start the morning with a boat tour on the canals of Tortuguero National Park, exploring the flora and fauna that inhabits this area. Expect to see anything from small reptiles such as the Jesus Christ Lizard, multiple species of migratory and stationary birds, to the king of the Costa Rican jungles: the imposing jaguar.



On the return you will stop at the town of Tortuguero, walking around and learning more about their way of living.

Lunch will be at a floating restaurant while you enjoy a pleasant ride along the river. The rest of the day is at leisure to relax at the hotel before dinner.

Total sightseeing time is approximately 3 hours.

Destination Information

Boat Trip – Explore the canals of the Tortuguero National Park on a leisurely-paced canal boat. As you cruise along you can enjoy the lush biodiversity of the area, spotting monkeys (there are three different species) iguanas, crocodiles, alligators, turtles, manatees and 400 species of birds.

Day 5: Tortuguero to Arenal

Meals: B, L, D

Today you leave the Caribbean as your exploration continues crossing mountains, rivers and different kinds of forests. Cross back to the mainland and travel to one of the landmarks of Costa Rica, the Arenal. The transfer times is between 1.5 – 2 hours depending on water levels.

With a stop for lunch at a local restaurant, you will drive 1 hour to the town of Sarapiquí where you will visit the house of a local farmer and get to taste the local delicacy of fresh cut heart of palm.



Continue the 1.5-hour journey to Arenal Volcano, where the rest of the day is at leisure, before dinner at the hotel.

Destination Information

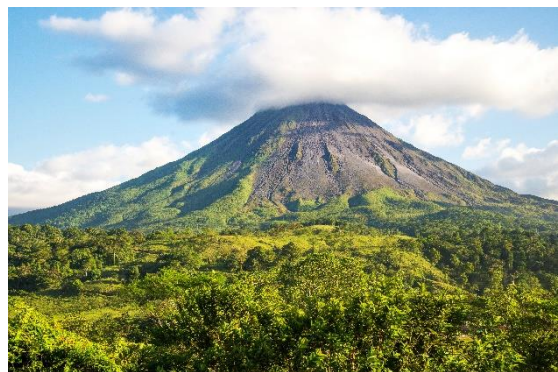
Heart of Palm – This vegetable is harvested from the inner core and growing bud of certain palm trees, most notably the coconut palm. They are cut into cylinders or sliced into rings, and then packed in brine or water. While looking like smooth, thick white asparagus spears, they are said to taste like artichokes.

Day 6: Arenal Volcano

Meals: B, L, D

This morning you visit Eco Centro Danaus, one of the most important projects for wildlife protection and preservation in the area. The Reserve protects roughly three hectares of secondary forest. Enjoy a 1 hour walk exploring, before heading to La Fortuna village for lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon you will visit the Arenal 1968 Park, where the hill hiking trails were formed by lava during the Arenal Volcano 1968 eruption. The 2-hour hike offers you great panoramic views of Arenal Volcano and Arenal Lake.



There is no better way to unwind after a long day than a visit to the hot springs. These family-owned natural hot springs, 15 minutes' drive away, are heated from the heart of the Arenal Volcano. Enjoy the peace and beautiful scenery for about 2 hours before dinner.

Please note that the terrain is mostly gravel with loose rocks. The lowest point is 600m above sea level, and the highest is 900m. A moderate fitness level is required for this trail, however easier trails are available and your guide will choose the best trail for all.

Destination Information

Arenal Volcano – Costa Rica's best-known volcano is an active stratovolcano, measuring at least 1633 metres high, with the cone shaped crater 140 metres in diameter. Dominating the landscape, this volcano has been in a resting phase since 2010, though its slopes and the forest around it still show the effects of its most active periods.

Day 7: Arenal Volcano

Meals: B, L, D

Just 5 minutes from the hotel you will enjoy a trip in an inflatable boat through the scenic Río Peñas Blancas. As you paddle or float downstream, your naturalist guides will point out a wide variety of trees, birds, monkeys and other wildlife.



This 1 hour 30 minute eco-tour, without the noise of a motorboat, is the perfect way to relax and enjoy the nature that usually coexists on the banks of rivers in San Carlos. During the tour, you will stop to share a mug of coffee with a farmer living isolated from the town.

Lunch will be at the hotel before you head off to a local farm to learn about the history and cultivation of cocoa. Explore the significance it held for indigenous communities during the precolonial era, and discover the process it undergoes to transform into the chocolate we all love before delighting in some tasting.

Destination Information

Río Peñas Blancas – This river runs through the Tilaran Mountain Range where a good portion of it is calm waters, offering you the easiest and best way to see the wildlife.

Day 8: Arenal to Monteverde

Meals: B, L, D

Today you leave the imposing Arenal Volcano and its rain forest behind as you move to the cloud forest area of Monteverde. Drive 2 hours to the town of Tilaran, where you will stop for lunch.



It will take a further 2 hours to reach Monteverde, as part of this drive will be on gravel road. You will have time to rest before meeting your guide and fellow travelers in the late afternoon to take on a 1.5 hour cloud forest night walk. Walking in the forest at night is a magical experience, as you learn more about the various species that rule the forest at nightfall. It is possible to spot some mammals, snakes, tarantulas, active and sleeping birds while enjoying the nightly symphony of frogs and insects.

Dinner is included tonight at a local restaurant after the tour.

Destination Information

Monteverde – One of the most famous conservation area in Central America, Monteverde consists of 26,000 acres of cloud forest, 90% of which is virgin. At 1,440 metres above sea level, the area is cloud forest rather than rainforest and within the reserve there are 2,500 plant species, 100 mammal species, 400 bird species and 120 reptilian and amphibian species. This is the best place to try and spot the resplendent quetzal, a beautiful bird native to Central America.

Day 9: Monteverde

Meals: B, D

This morning you will take one of the most emblematic walks of this area on the Monteverde Hanging Bridges, that combine natural trails and amazing hanging bridges. Enjoy this 2-hour walk where you get to see the flora and fauna at every level of these magical tropical forests. Crossing hanging bridges is a unique experience, offering you complete views of the forest canopy and access to a completely different ecosystem that can only be discovered at the highest points of trees.



Your afternoon is at leisure with the option to stay in the park. Make sure you return on time, as a local host will be sharing the history of the Quaker foundations of Monteverde with you later. This will last 1 hour.

Day 10: Monteverde to Manuel Antonio

Meals: B, L

Today you leave the cloud forest behind as you head to the last destination of the trip, the area of Manuel Antonio located on the Central Pacific Coast of the country. Completing the forest cycle of the country, this area hosts a large variety of flora and fauna in a relatively small area of land, but also a significant patch of protected sea.



It will be a 2-hour drive to your lunch stop and then a further 2-hour drive to your destination.

Enjoy amazing views of the Nicoya Gulf as you head down from Monteverde and the Tilaran Mountain Range and then cross famous coastal areas such as the Tarcoles, Carara and Jaco Beach on the way to Manuel Antonio.

The rest of the day is at leisure after arrival at the hotel.

Destination Information

Manuel Antonio – Providing shelter to many of Costa Rica's endangered species, Manuel Antonio may be Costa Rica's smallest park but it is considered as one of the best. Internationally it is one of the most biodiverse in the world and covers a range of eco-systems, from tropical forest to lagoons, mangroves and beaches. 109 species of mammal prowl the park and 184 species of bird living here.

Day 11: Manuel Antonio

Meals: B

The morning explore the pristine natural beauty of Manuel Antonio National Park filled with exotic wildlife such as monkeys, sloths, birds, reptiles and butterflies. This picturesque walk will take you to one of the beaches named the most beautiful in the world, by Forbes magazine.



Experience the lush rainforest behind you, white sandy beaches below, and crystalline blue waters. Have your camera ready, as your knowledgeable guide sets his trained eyes on diverse flora and fauna for you to capture along the way. You have approximately 3 hours to experience the natural beauty around you.

At the end of the tour, you can either stay at the park, head out to explore the town or go back to the hotel with your guide.

Day 12: Manuel Antonio

Meals: B, D

Today's morning is at leisure to relax before exploring the local flavors of the area this afternoon.

The first stop allows you about an hour at the local farmers' market in Quepos, where you have the opportunity to browse the stands and pick out ingredients for your dinner.



Continue towards the small town of Londres, to a private ranch and dining area where you will start with a walk through an organic garden to pick out some finishing flavours, colours and textures for your meal. Then for the 3 hours preparation, guided by the expert local cooks.

Participate in making corn tortillas by hand, exotic "ceviches" with plantain or banana, rice cooked the old-fashioned way, chicken in a hearty tomato sauce, "picadillos" (minced meats and veggies and spices combined), and more.

Days 13-15: Manuel Antonio to San Jose

Meals: B

This morning after breakfast you will transfer to the Juan Santamaria International Airport in San Jose for your flight home, arriving in 2 days due to crossing International Date Line. The transfer will take approximately 3 hours.

COSTA RICA TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Visas are not required for Australian passport holders for entry into Costa Rica for stays of up to 90 days. Flights to Costa Rica usually transfer through the United States, an ESTA Waiver is required.

Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

For the latest information on visa procedures, processing times and requirements, please kindly refer to our website <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/help-and-advice/passports-and-visas/>

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

Wendy Wu Tours does not accept responsibility for lost or undelivered items.

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

EATING IN COSTA RICA:

Costa Rican cuisine is a combination of influences of both the colonial Spanish and Afro-Caribbeans. The food is mild and has a high reliance on fresh fruit and vegetables – which isn't much of a surprise when you consider Costa Rica's huge biodiversity. Staple foods include rice and black beans, which are served at most meals, alongside plantain and grilled or sautéed meat or fish.

A typical breakfast is Gallo Pinto – rice and beans stir-fried together and served with eggs and sour cream or cheese, whilst a typical lunch, casado, is rice and beans (not mixed) with meat and a salad. Both are delicious and seasoned beautifully with local herbs and vegetables. The indigenous people of the Central American region ate corn as a large part of their diet, and it still features today. Tamales, for example, were introduced by the Aztecs and are still eaten at celebrations, especially Christmas. These are a dough of cornmeal, lard and spices stuffed with

meat, rice and vegetables and steamed in a leaf. Another food not too miss are empanadas, a delicious snack. Similar to a Cornish pasty but with a corn-based dough, these are filled with beef, chicken, cheese or fruit.

Whilst we strongly recommend trying as many local dishes as possible, Costa Rica also has a wide range of international foods available – Mexican, steakhouses, Chinese and Italian are particularly popular.

GROUP SIZE:

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in a Go Beyond group, although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Costa Rica. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assure that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Solo travellers: If you are a solo traveller and willing to share a room, you will not have to pay a single supplement for any hotel rooms. Willing to share single travellers booking within 75 days of the first day of a group tour will be subject to availability. If no suitable match is available at time of booking you will be required to pay all single supplements.

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that portorage is not included on our tours in Costa Rica. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. **However, mini buses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).** Roads in Costa Rica have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Costa Rica is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. To avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

By law, there is a 10% fee on any restaurant bill that is designated to the servers. Keeping this in mind, you are more than welcome to add some more tip upon your discretion, to a server of an specific place if you consider your service was exceptional.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

DEVELOPMENT IN COSTA RICA:

Although Costa Rica is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from you National Escort or Local Guides.

SOUVENIRS:

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrate a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

LUGGAGE:

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of \$300AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. In your Final Documentation an Optional Excursion Sheet will be included outlining the activities available in each city and local cost associated. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Updated: November 2024