

COLOURS OF COSTA RICA

Go Beyond Tour | 15 Days | Physical Level 1

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 Sarapiqui
- Enjoy magnificent views of Nicoya Gulf enroute to Manuel Antonio

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 stated
- 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
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only things 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 international flights or 13 days in duration based on 'Land Only'.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to our reservations team.

Join the tour on Day 1 in San José and end the tour on Day 13 in Manuel Antonio. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention is 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 will make the best possible arrangements whilst 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 an authentic welcome dinner.

Destination Information

San José – Located in the heart of Costa Rica, San José is the country's vibrant capital and its political, economic and cultural centre. Founded in the 18th century, the city blends historic architecture and Spanish colonial influences with modern neighbourhoods, lively streets and a thriving cultural scene. From its museums and theatres to its bustling markets and plazas, San José offers an engaging introduction to Costa Rican life and heritage.

Day 2: San José — Meals: B, L



This morning, discover the vibrant capital of San José on a two-hour tour of the city centre. Explore its main streets and downtown neighbourhoods, passing some of the city's most notable theatres, museums and landmarks.

Continue to the outskirts of the city and the charming town of Escazú, around a 20-minute drive away. With its strong colonial heritage and traditional character, Escazú offers a glimpse into a different side of Costa Rican life. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before visiting a local artisan to discover the colourful tradition of 'mascaradas' – elaborate handmade masks traditionally used in festivals and celebrations.

Complete your visit at a traditional sugar cane mill, learning how sugar cane is processed using time-honoured techniques. The afternoon tour lasts approximately two hours.

Day 3: San Jose to Tortuguero — Meals: B, L, D



Today, journey towards the remote wilderness of Tortuguero, travelling through Braulio Carrillo National Park and passing through rural communities surrounded by banana and cacao plantations.

Continue by boat, travelling along the rivers into the lush jungle of Tortuguero. The boat journey takes approximately 1.5–2 hours, depending on water levels, and offers a wonderful introduction to the region's spectacular natural surroundings.

After lunch at the hotel, meet a local elder who will share the fascinating history of Tortuguero and its transformation from a small lumberjack community into one of Costa Rica's most important wildlife protection areas.

The remainder of the day is at leisure before dinner at the hotel.

Please note: 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

Braulio Carrillo National Park – Stretching across the Central Volcanic Mountain Range between the Poás and Irazú volcanoes, Braulio Carrillo National Park is one of Costa Rica's largest protected areas, covering around 50,000 hectares. The park encompasses rugged mountains, deep valleys and dense evergreen rainforest, with rivers and streams winding through its dramatic landscape. The park is renowned for its exceptional biodiversity, with around 6,000 species of plants and an abundance of wildlife. Its forests provide a habitat for monkeys, tapirs, pumas and jaguars, as well as hundreds of species of birds, including the colourful quetzal and the distinctive bare-throated bellbird.

Day 4: Tortuguero — Meals: B, L, D



This morning, set out by boat through the waterways of Tortuguero National Park, exploring the lush rainforest and discovering the incredible flora and fauna that thrive here. Keep watch for a variety of wildlife, from Jesus Christ lizards and colourful tropical birds to monkeys, caimans and other inhabitants of the forest and waterways. With luck, you may even catch a glimpse of the elusive jaguar, one of Costa Rica's most iconic predators.

Continue to the village of Tortuguero, where you'll take a leisurely walk through the colourful streets and learn more about the community and its traditional way of life. Enjoy lunch at a floating restaurant as you continue to cruise along the river, surrounded by the peaceful beauty of the rainforest.

The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to relax at your hotel before dinner.

Destination Information

Tortuguero National Park – Located on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, Tortuguero National Park is a spectacular wilderness of tropical rainforest, wetlands, rivers and winding canals. Often referred to as Costa Rica's "Little Amazon", the park is renowned for its exceptional biodiversity and is home to monkeys, sloths, caimans, iguanas and hundreds of species of birds.

Day 5: Tortuguero - Arenal — Meals: B, L



Today, leave the Caribbean coast behind and continue your journey towards the imposing Arenal Volcano, travelling through a changing landscape of mountains, rivers and lush forests. Cross back to the mainland by boat, enjoying the scenic journey as you make your way inland.

Stop for lunch at a local restaurant before continuing to Sarapiquí, where you'll visit the home of a local farmer. Learn about life in this rural region and sample the local delicacy of freshly harvested heart of palm.

Continue to Arenal Volcano, where the remainder of the day is at leisure before dinner at the hotel.

Destination Information

Heart of Palm – This delicate vegetable is harvested from the tender inner core and growing bud of certain palm trees. Once harvested, it is typically cut into cylinders or sliced into rings before being preserved in brine or water. With its smooth, pale appearance, heart of palm resembles thick white asparagus, while its delicate flavour is often compared to that of artichokes.

Day 6: Arenal Meals: B, L, D



This morning, visit Eco Centro Danaus, an important local project dedicated to wildlife protection and conservation. The reserve protects around three hectares of secondary forest, providing a haven for a variety of plants and wildlife. Enjoy a one-hour guided walk through the reserve before continuing to the village of La Fortuna for lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, explore Arenal 1968 Park on a two-hour hike through landscapes shaped by the Arenal Volcano's 1968 eruption. Follow trails formed by ancient lava flows and enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the volcano and Arenal Lake along the way.

After a day of exploring, unwind with a visit to a family-owned natural hot spring, around a 15-minute drive away. Heated by the volcanic activity beneath Arenal, the springs offer a peaceful setting surrounded by lush scenery. Spend around two hours relaxing in the warm waters before dinner.

Please note: The terrain on the Arenal 1968 trails is predominantly gravel with loose rocks. The trail ranges from approximately 600 to 900 metres above sea level and requires a moderate level of fitness. Easier trails are available, and your guide will select the most suitable route for the group.

Destination Information

Arenal Volcano – One of Costa Rica's most iconic natural landmarks, Arenal is an active stratovolcano rising to 1,633 metres above the surrounding landscape. Its distinctive cone, measuring around 140 metres in diameter, dominates the skyline and has become one of the country's most recognisable sights. Although the volcano has remained dormant since 2010, its slopes and surrounding forests still bear the scars of its more active periods, offering a fascinating reminder of the powerful forces that have shaped the region.

Day 7: Arenal – Río Peñas Blancas Meals: B, L, D



Just a short distance from the hotel, embark on an eco-tour along the scenic Río Peñas Blancas. Drift downstream in an inflatable boat, accompanied by naturalist guides who will point out the diverse wildlife and vegetation along the riverbanks, including tropical birds, monkeys and native trees. With no motorboat noise, the peaceful journey offers a wonderful way to experience the natural beauty of the San Carlos region. Along the way, stop to share a cup of coffee with a local farmer who lives in this remote riverside community.

After lunch at the hotel, visit a local cocoa farm to discover the history and cultivation of one of Costa Rica's most important crops. Learn about the significance of cocoa to indigenous communities before exploring the process of transforming the beans into chocolate. Finish with a tasting of the delicious finished product.

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 - Monteverde Meals: B, L, D



Today, leave the imposing Arenal Volcano and lush rainforest behind as you journey to the cloud forests of Monteverde. Take the scenic Lake Crossing, travelling by road to Lake Arenal before boarding a boat across the lake. Enjoy spectacular views of the volcano and surrounding mountains before continuing by road through the rolling countryside to Monteverde.

Enjoy a magical cloud forest night walk, venturing into the forest after dark to discover the fascinating nocturnal wildlife that emerges after sunset. Afterwards, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Destination Information

Monteverde – One of Central America's most renowned conservation areas, Monteverde is famed for its spectacular cloud forests, which cover around 26,000 acres of lush mountainous terrain. Located at approximately 1,440 metres above sea level, the forests are shrouded in mist and clouds, creating a cool, humid environment that supports an extraordinary diversity of plant and animal life. The region is home to thousands of plant species, alongside an impressive array of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Day 9: Monteverde — Meals: B, D



This morning, experience one of Monteverde's most iconic walks at the Monteverde Hanging Bridges. Follow a network of natural trails through the enchanting cloud forest, crossing a series of suspension bridges that offer spectacular views into the forest canopy. Over the course of the two-hour walk, discover the remarkable flora and fauna found at different levels of this unique ecosystem, from the forest floor to the treetops.

The afternoon is at leisure, with the option to relax at the park or explore more of Monteverde at your own pace. Later, meet a local host who will share the fascinating story of Monteverde's Quaker community, whose arrival in the 1950s helped shape the character and development of the region. This one-hour experience offers an insight into the community's history, values and enduring legacy.

Day 10: Monteverde - Manuel Antonio — Meals: B, L, D



Today, leave the cloud forest behind and journey to your final destination, Manuel Antonio on Costa Rica's Central Pacific Coast. This beautiful region completes the country's remarkable transition from highland cloud forests to tropical coastal landscapes, with an abundance of flora and fauna both on land and in the surrounding protected waters.

Enjoy spectacular views as you descend from Monteverde and the Tilarán Mountain Range towards the Pacific coast. The journey takes approximately four hours in total, with a lunch stop around two hours into the drive. Along the way, pass through some of Costa Rica's most famous coastal areas, including the Tárcoles River, Carara and Jacó Beach.

On arrival in Manuel Antonio, check in to your hotel and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure.

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



This 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



Enjoy a leisurely morning before setting out on your final adventure, a boat tour through the Isla Damas mangroves, one of Costa Rica's most fascinating ecosystems.

Board an open river boat and glide peacefully through the mangrove canals beneath a canopy of red, black and white mangroves. Your naturalist guide will point out the abundant wildlife along the way, from white-faced monkeys, sloths, crab-eating raccoons and iguanas to herons and other water birds. Keep an eye on the muddy banks for crabs and, occasionally, crocodiles basking by the water.

With no engine noise to disturb the surroundings, this is a wonderfully peaceful way to experience the mangroves and learn about their vital role in the ecosystem where the rainforest meets the sea.

Please note: This excursion is tide-dependent and can only operate at high tide. As a result, the departure time may vary between morning and afternoon depending on the day's tide schedule. Your guide will confirm the timing locally.

Days 13-15: Depart Manuel Antonio Meals: B

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



COLOURS OF COSTA RICA TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

New Zealand passport holders are currently permitted entry to Costa Rica without a visa for stays of up to 180 days.

Please note that flights to Costa Rica may transit via the United States, in which case an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) may be required.

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

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.

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 reflects the country's diverse cultural heritage, combining Indigenous, Spanish and Afro-Caribbean influences. The food is generally fresh and mild, making the most of the abundance of fruit, vegetables and other produce grown across the country's varied landscapes. Rice and black beans are staples, often accompanied by plantain, fresh vegetables and grilled or sautéed meat or fish.

One of the country's most popular breakfasts is gallo pinto, a comforting combination of rice and black beans seasoned with herbs and vegetables, traditionally served with eggs, cheese or sour cream. For lunch, try casado, a classic Costa Rican dish of rice and beans served separately alongside meat or fish, salad and plantain.

Corn has long been an important part of the diet of Indigenous communities across Central America and continues to feature prominently in Costa Rican cooking. Tamales, particularly popular during Christmas and other celebrations, are made from seasoned corn dough filled with meat and vegetables, wrapped in leaves and steamed. Another favourite is the empanada, a delicious corn-based pastry filled with savoury ingredients such as beef, chicken or cheese, or occasionally sweet fillings.

Be sure to sample as much local cuisine as possible during your visit, but you'll also find plenty of international options throughout Costa Rica, with Mexican, Italian, Chinese and steakhouse restaurants particularly popular.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to rainforest lodges. 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 may exist between New Zealand and Costa Rica.

All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities and air conditioning where needed. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your 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.

SOUVENIRS:

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions that demonstrates 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 that hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

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.

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. Roads in Costa Rica have generally been 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 sections above are approximations only.

Boats: Boat travel forms an important part of your Costa Rican adventure, particularly when exploring the country's rivers, canals and coastal waterways. During the tour, you will travel on a variety of boats, ranging from small, non-motorised vessels used for peaceful river and mangrove excursions to motorised boats used for longer transfers between destinations.

Boat sizes and styles vary depending on the journey and local conditions. Some excursions are designed for wildlife viewing and move slowly through narrow waterways, while others provide a more practical means of reaching remote areas such as Tortuguero. Boarding may involve stepping between the boat and a jetty or riverbank, and access can occasionally be uneven.

Conditions on the water can vary, and journeys may be affected by weather, water levels or tides. For comfort and practicality, we recommend wearing suitable footwear with a secure grip and keeping valuables and electronic equipment protected from water. A lightweight waterproof jacket or poncho is also useful, as tropical showers can occur even on otherwise sunny days.

Life jackets are provided where required, and your guide or boat crew will give you any necessary safety instructions before departure.

APPROPRIATE DRESS:

Costa Rica has a warm and humid climate in many areas, so lightweight, breathable and quick-drying clothing is recommended. Pack a waterproof jacket or poncho for rainforest excursions and sudden tropical showers, along with comfortable walking shoes with good grip for trails and uneven terrain. Closed-toe sandals or sturdy water shoes are also useful for boat trips and wet conditions.

For the cooler cloud forests of Monteverde, temperatures can be noticeably lower, particularly in the evenings, so bring a warm fleece or lightweight jumper and a waterproof outer layer. Long trousers are recommended for walking and can also provide protection from insects and vegetation.

A sun hat, sunglasses and high-factor sunscreen are essential, with sunglasses preferably secured with a cord during boat trips and outdoor activities. Insect repellent is also strongly recommended, particularly when visiting rainforest and wetland areas.

You may wish to pack a small daypack for excursions, along with a reusable water bottle. A change of clothes can be useful after rainforest walks or other activities where you may encounter rain or humid conditions. Comfortable, casual clothing is suitable for evenings, although a slightly smarter outfit may be useful for any special dinners.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

Wendy Wu does not give specific health advice, but we do recommend you see your doctor at least six weeks prior to travel for advice and to allow time for any necessary vaccinations. Please remember to take your itinerary with you. Safe travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements. You can also access the New Zealand 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. If a visa is required, our Visa Department will be in touch with the paperwork and next steps. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Updated: October 2026