



COSTA RICA TRIP PREPARATION

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

You are responsible for purchasing flights to and from the start and end location of your trip (*Juan Santamaria International Airport in San Jose Costa Rica*). GoPhilanthropic will need copies of all of your flight itineraries in order to arrange your pick-ups. Please note your name and date of travel and send to info@gophilanthropic.com

Please be careful when booking your flights as the times of arrival and departure can be late at night or in the early hours of the morning. This can cause confusion in planning for the correct dates. If you are not able to arrive on the assigned arrival day or depart on the assigned departure day for your quoted trip, you are responsible for any additional costs to coordinate with the rest of the group.

We are happy to assist you in purchasing your long-haul flights to and from Juan Santamaria International. Please contact us for more information at info@gophilanthropic.com.

AIRPORT TAX

There is a **\$26 USD departure tax** due at the Juan Santamaria International Airport prior to departure on all international flights. You can purchase this at the airport on the day of departure but add extra time to do so as there can be long lines.



VISA REQUIREMENTS

US, UK and Canadian citizens **do not require a visa** for a less than 90 day stay but you are required to bring a passport valid **at least 6 months** from your intended arrival to Costa Rica. Please check that your passport expiration date is within the allowable time frame. We recommend that you bring a **photocopy** of your passport in your luggage as you travel.

LUGGAGE ALLOWANCE

Each airline has its own luggage allowance policy. **Excess baggage** is charged at a specific rate depending on the individual route. You are advised to check your airline prior to travel since prices and regulations are subject to change. All airlines now stipulate that **liquids, gels and/or aerosols** in HAND LUGGAGE must be in completely closed containers of **3 oz/100ml** or less (even if the container is partially filled).

For flights from your home city to/from San Jose Costa Rica, please contact your airline prior to travel for luggage allowance regulations.

ARRIVAL TIPS

After collecting your luggage and completing the immigration and customs procedures, you will walk through the exit gate. Take your time to look for the welcome sign with a **GoPhilanthropic and DDW logo**.

If you are approached by anyone offering transport services **DO NOT** follow him or her. Avoid revealing your full names to strangers on the airplane as they might make a fake welcome signboard with your name. If after some time you are unable to find the welcome signboard, please call the local emergency number listed on your voucher for immediate assistance.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travelers are highly recommended to purchase trip and travel insurance. **Trip insurance** covers the cost of your trip should you be forced to cancel for objective reasons such as a death of a family member or accident **BEFORE** you start the trip. The tour operator will still apply the full charge and the insurance company will cover the loss. Whereas, **travel insurance** covers costs such as emergency and medical evacuation, hospital fees, property loss, cancellation of a scheduled trip due to weather **DURING** the trip, and so forth.

Coverage for trip and travel insurance varies depending on the policy purchased. For more information on purchasing travel insurance please click on our "Travel Insurance" link at www.gophilanthropic.com



HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATIONS

No vaccinations are required to visit Costa Rica. We suggest bringing a **strong bug repellent and plenty of sun block**, which can be very expensive in Costa Rica. Even the slightest scratch can become infectious in tropical climates. Keep any wounds clean and treat promptly with antiseptic.

Costa Rica has reliable medical service yet we highly recommend traveling with **personal health coverage**. Pharmacies can be found throughout the country with a comprehensive array of over the counter drugs. Hospitals and clinics are located throughout the country.

CURRENCY

The monetary unit is the **colon**. You can exchange money at any bank, airport and at most hotels. Local banks normally give the best exchange rate but are not always convenient to get to en route of your trip. The exchange rate normally hovers around **500 colones = \$1 US**. While US currency is commonly accepted in Costa Rica, if you pay in US dollars, you will receive change in colones.

Please note that Traveler's Checks are NOT widely used in Costa Rica. All major credit cards, particularly Visa, are widely accepted in hotels, bars, restaurants and stores.

LANGUAGE

Spanish is the official language of Costa Rica, yet English is widely spoken. We recommend learning basic questions and greetings prior to arriving in San Jose. **LESCO** is the official sign language of Costa Rica, which has a 60%-75% similarity to American Sign Language.

COMMUNICATIONS

The country code is 506.

Email is offered in almost all hotels although the service can be slow at times. Many of the hotels we offer have wireless service in the lobbies and/or in the rooms. There are Internet cafes spread throughout San Jose and in smaller towns as well. *Be careful to not save your password or sensitive information on public computer terminals.*

International phone service is available at most hotels but beware of the expense. We recommend bringing a calling card or purchasing an international calling card in Costa Rica (widely sold). Cell phone service is spotty.



ELECTRICITY

Electricity in Costa Rica is **120 Volts**, alternating at 60 cycles per second. Most outlets are the same **two or three prong outlets** used in North America.

TIME ZONE

Costa Rica is **equivalent to US Central Time** (6 hours behind Greenwich). It does not recognize daylight savings, thus is 2 hours behind EST at this time or 7 hours behind Greenwich. There is little variation in dawn/dusk – normally 6am / 6pm.

CLIMATE

Ideal almost year-round, the climate throughout Costa Rica is a **moderate 72 °F** in the highlands, while at the lowlands and coastal areas temperatures range from the low **70's to the high 90's**. Evenings in San Jose are free of humid heat and beaches are cooled by ocean breezes. Rainy season occurs from the end of May through November, with the heaviest rainfall in October.



The Atlantic or Caribbean side is driest from February through April, with a short "summer" in June and July, and the wettest months from November through January. However, you should be prepared for rain at any time during the year in this part of the country.

The Pacific side and central parts of the country are driest from January through March. There is a common misconception of imagining the "rainy season" to be "monsoon-like" where it never stops raining. Nothing could be further from the truth!

We can normally be assured of sunny mornings followed by some rain in the afternoons or evenings, and even plenty of days without rain. The region, for example, experiences a "short summer" during its rainy season, and the weather can be quite pleasant. Average highs are between 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit and average lows between 72-75 degrees.



WHAT TO BRING

Remember to pack light...you can always do laundry at the hotels while you are there.

- **Passport** – Valid at least 6 months from departure date with at least three empty pages available
- **Trip and Travel Insurance** (*optional*) – Be sure that it will be valid for the whole journey
- **Health Insurance** (*optional*) – Include 24 hour emergency contact number and next of kin contact details
- List of **emergency contact** number of the Go Philanthropic/DDW ground tour operator
- **Debit/Credit Cards** with cancellation numbers for emergency
- **Contact Information** of close friends/family (with international dialing codes)
- **Air tickets and Tour itinerary**
- **Money Belt** – Ensure that it is discrete and comfortable to wear
- **First Aid kit** - Basic travel kit to cover minor mishaps which may occur along the way
- **Personal Medication** –with international doctors’ note to ensure easy passage of medication across international borders
- Strong **bug repellent** and **Sun block** – High UVA protection ideally
- **Sunglasses & sunhat**
- **Binoculars**
- Comfortable **walking shoes** and **waterproof sandals** – some restaurants require closed-toe shoes
- **Long Sleeve Top and Trousers** – For hikes in the jungle and to protect against mosquitoes at dawn/dusk
- Comfortable lightweight, **loose fitting**, cotton clothing
- Light **jacket / sweatshirt** for hikes and cool evenings in San Jose
- **Bathing Suit**
- Small daytime **Backpack**
- **Camera & Extra Batteries**
- **US Bills** in small or medium denominations (\$5, \$10, \$20)
- **Copies** of your passport, insurance and credit cards to keep with your luggage

FESTIVALS AND HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

January 1 – New Year’s Day

April 11th – Anniversary of the Battle of Rivas

May 1 – Labor Day

July 25 – Annexation of Guanacaste

Sept 15 – Independence Day

Oct 12 – Columbus Day

Dec 1 – Abolition of Armed Forces

Dec 25 – Christmas



TIPPING

Please note that your **driver and activity tour guide tips are included** in your rate. Please consult with your trip director for details. You are free to tip additionally if you wish.

It is customary to tip in Costa Rica and helpful to have 1000 colones notes or US dollar bills on hand to tip for incidentals. For guides and drivers tipping will depend on how many days they provided services. A helpful guide will receive anywhere from \$5-10 tip per day per person. Please note that restaurant tips are often included in the bill. Check carefully before leaving extra.

EATING AND DRINKING

Costa Rican cuisine relies heavily on the use of **rice, beans, chicken, plantains, tortillas** and a host of **tropical fresh fruits and vegetables**. While hot sauce is readily offered, the food is **not spiced**. **Fresh fish and beef** can be a highlight. The higher end hotels offer an array of **International and Continental cuisine** including Asian fusion. In general, the local food is natural and quite simple, but tasty. **Brick oven pizzerias** are found throughout Costa Rica.

In many dishes, **yucca** is often substituted for potato, perhaps boiled and mashed, fried to exquisite crispness to accompany meat and sandwiches instead of fries, or simply boiled and served with butter and garlic. **Plantains**, a type of banana, are another Costa Rican favourite, and are most often boiled, mashed, and stuffed with cheese or fried to accompany meats or bean dishes. Unlike bananas, plantains are much larger and need to be cooked to be eaten. Costa Rican diet also includes plenty of meats including: **poultry, fish, beef and pork**.



Pilsen and Imperial beers are both brewed locally. Wines are readily available yet European and US wines are typically more expensive than Chilean or Argentinean wines. Many types of rum are manufactured locally and make wonderful tropical drinks when combined with blended fresh fruits and coconut.

Breakfast: A traditional Costa Rican breakfast consists of "**gallo pinto**" (Pinto Rooster), eggs, tortillas and sour cream, with coffee and fresh fruit juice. Most restaurants will offer some international options as well. Of course Costa Rica produces some of the finest coffee in the world and it's not uncommon to see bumper stickers around proclaiming "Juan Valdez drinks Costa Rican coffee."

Lunch: Known as "**casado**" (Married), a typical lunch includes: rice and beans, one choice of meat (beef, chicken, pork, or fish), salad, and a fried plantain.

Dinner: Pretty much whatever you like! Fish and seafood here are particularly excellent, well priced, and as fresh as the fruits and vegetables.



COSTA RICA OVERVIEW

There are few places where the forces of nature play so interactively. **Rainforests, cloud forests, coastline, volcanoes, mangroves, ragging rivers, exotic flora and fauna, incredible wildlife**...it's a veritable haven for anyone who loves the earth – plain and simple. In Costa Rica alone there are more **than 9,000 types of flowering plants**, including 1,200 species of orchids-- **850 species of birds** have been identified, more than the United States and Canada combined. It proudly represents 6% of the existing biodiversity in the entire world and 25% of the country is composed of conservation and natural protected territory.

While Costa Rica has a varying topography with ranging climate zones, it rests wholly in the **tropics** and thus enjoys **warm weather all the year round**. The country is a pleasure to explore, even in the wet season where the sound of afternoon rains on jungle leaves adds just one more layer of authenticity to the experience. Whether you are a mature couple, a family with children, a couple looking for a romantic getaway, or an adventure seeker, Costa Rica has something for you.

Costa Rica attracts **more than 1 million visitors** a year seeking to experience a bit of the magic to be found there. However, tourism has had significant negative effects on the natural and social environment. Large scale development around some of the country's most visited areas has threatened precious ecosystems and habitats. Prostitution, drugs and depletion of heritage and culture are all elements that can go hand in hand with tourism if not managed carefully. Costa Rica battles with all of these issues yet as a result has emerged as a genuine leader in recent years with tremendous efforts in the areas of promotion of **Sustainable Tourism, Responsible Travel** – it's a true model for Eco Travel worldwide. We can look at the mistakes yet we can also take a lesson for solution-oriented efforts to correct them. In 2007 the government of Costa Rica said it wants to be the first developing country to become carbon neutral by 2021.

GoPhilanthropic and Discovering Deaf Worlds have paved the way for you to have a truly authentic, meaningful, even luxurious getaway. But we have made sure that you are doing so in a conscious way, through responsible hotels and tour guides. In addition, we connect you with **local social and conservation programs** so that you learn about, meet and support local individuals working hard towards self-sustainability.

www.GoPhilanthropic.com
info@GoPhilanthropic.com
585-319-3890