



GREEN PASSPORT

HOLIDAYS FOR A LIVING PLANET

COSTA RICA



COSTA RICA
No Artificial Ingredients
www.visitcostarica.com

www.visitcostarica.com



**Rainforest
Alliance**

www.rainforest-alliance.org



www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr



UNEP
United Nations Environment Programme

www.unep.org

WELCOME

Welcome to your passport to greener travel. This Green Passport introduces you, the potential traveler, to simple ways you can help make tourism a more sustainable activity. It's about tourism that respects the environment and culture and is good for the economic and social development of the communities that will be your hosts.

As you take a tour through the pages of the Passport you will pick up background information and useful tips for every stage of your journey. There is also a complementary website:

www.unep.org/greenpassport, where you can find additional information.



WELCOME TO COSTA RICA

NAME

SURNAME

MOBILE

EMAIL

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

GREEN TRAVEL TIPS AT A GLANCE

"Pass on smart tips and green addresses".



Planning your trip

- **Background knowledge:** Discover your holiday destination and its culture in advance.
- **Holiday selection:** Choose sustainable responsible products, hotels, tour operators and travel agents.
- **Pack light:** Reduce your emissions by packing only what you really need.



Getting there

- **Arrival and departure:** Take your time and enjoy "slow travelling". Take a train or bus to appreciate the countryside.
- **Mobility:** Try diverse alternative transport modes: If by foot, bus, sailboat or others.
- **Accommodation:** Ask for "green" accommodation possibilities. Look for CST certified businesses.
- **Culinary delights:** Indulge your taste buds with local specialties. Taste the finest flavors of seasonal and local cuisine.



Getting Around

- **Culture & Country:** Discover foreign cultures and environments. Ask for advice and respect local cultures and standards. Sexual Exploitation of minors is a crime punished with up to 16 years of jailtime.
- **Fun in the water:** Avoid the use of lightweight plastic products and

the use of soaps; dispose any litter and consider the sensibilities of local people - both regarding what you wear and the fact that you're using "their" water.

- **Pleasure in arid lands:** Prefer specialised, local guides and local transport modes; use water sparingly and leave no litter.
- **Panorama joys in the mountains:** Try to adapt your tour routes to the environment in order to help avoid damage to natural areas.
- **Diving- and snorkelling adventures:** Admire the under water world, but don't touch it and avoid kicking up sand with your flippers.
- **Wildlife explorations:** Observe wildlife in an adequate distance. Binoculars, spotting scopes, or telephoto lenses give the best up-close view of animals and allow you to observe the animal's natural behaviour.
- **Leave only footprints:** Dispose of rubbish carefully, recycle where possible and reuse your beverage bottles and shopping bags. Please place your cigarette butts or discarded matches in appropriate disposal places and take care not to start a fire.
- **Green Tip:** Avoid waste by refilling your water bottles with Costa Rica's tap water. The water here is of a very high quality and completely drinkable.



RECYCLE WHERE POSSIBLE



REFILL YOUR WATER BOTTLE

GREEN TRAVEL TIPS AT A GLANCE



Before going back

- **Take a look back:** You may want to reflect on your holidays: What types of activities have you enjoyed as well as what were their consequences for the environment and people?



After your trip

- **Friends:** Tell your friends about your green holiday experiences.
- **Advice:** Give tips to people interested in travelling "green".
- **Report:** Report all illegal incidents.



SHARE WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES



Make sure your money is well spent by choosing tour operators, hotels, and service providers committed to sustainable tourism.

3 key questions to ask before you book:

- #1. Are you committed to sustainable tourism, e.g. conserve energy, recycle water, waste treatment, certification of hotel?
- #2. Do you monitor your environmental practices?
- #3. Do your activities also benefit the local community, e.g. local staff employed; working conditions?



Interested in further information?

Visit our travel guide website:

www.visitcostarica.com or www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr

KEY POINTS ABOUT COSTA RICA

Where is Costa Rica located? Costa Rica is a country located in Central America, bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the east and south, the Pacific Ocean to the west and south and the Caribbean Sea to the east.

How big is the country? Although the country is small, and it covers only 0.03 % of the surface of the globe, it proudly shelters a 5% of the existing biodiversity in the entire world. 25.58 % of the country is composed of conservation and natural protected territory.

What is the capital city of Costa Rica? San José

How many people live in Costa Rica? 4.3 million people approximately

What are the spoken languages? Spanish is the official language, Bribri is spoken in some places and Mekatelyu in the Caribbean, and also a big part of the population can speak English.

What type of tourism can you do in Costa Rica?

In Costa Rica you can enjoy many different activities during your vacation: adventure tourism, sun and beach, rural tourism, ecotourism, business, meetings and incentive tourism, nature observation tourism, sports tourism, wellness and medical tourism, honeymoon and family tourism. All of these can be done in a sustainable way if you choose CST certified hotels and tour operators.

There's a saying in Costa Rica that has become almost a second trademark and a symbol of its people's attitude towards life and enjoyment. The saying is only two words, but it conveys a whole world of feeling. It goes: Pura Vida!

These two words put together, in the context of our culture and natural environment, express that a person, a moment, an experience and, anything you want to apply them to, is full of life, full of living, full of enjoyment, filled with happiness and content, filled with quality or just plain fun. It applies to any and all situations or matters you want to qualify as... Pura Vida. It has an intrinsic relationship with friendliness, sociability and the energy you acquire from a truly natural environment.

The people, the nature, the culture, the experience are all part of what Pura Vida conveys. And that basically is what the country offers its visitors: to slow down and enjoy the beauty of life.

GREEN PASSPORT – COSTA RICA

When the first Spanish explorers reached this Central American country, they called it *costa rica*, or "rich coast": which may have been in response to the gold jewelry worn by its native people, or in anticipation of the riches they hoped to find there. But time has shown that rather than major deposits of precious metals, Costa Rica's wealth lies in its exuberant tropical nature and its friendly people.

In fact, Costa Rica is one of the 20 nations with the highest biodiversity – nearly 5% of the world's plant and animal species are found within its 19,730-square-mile (51,100-square-kilometer) territory.



Natural Wealth

That natural treasure trove is partially the result of Costa Rica's varied topography. If a traveler crosses the country from its Pacific coast to the Caribbean, they pass plains, valleys, volcanoes, lakes, rivers of various widths and tropical dry, rain and cloud forests.

This country is composed of a great array of microclimates and ecosystems that combine to make it an extremely diverse and enticing destination. A quarter of Costa Rica's territory is protected within

national parks and other government and private reserves. In 1998, the country passed a Biodiversity Law that promotes sustainable development and the conservation of its biological assets.

It is thus no surprise that Costa Rica has become the destination of reference for ecotourism, nature and adventure tourism, as well as for research on tropical flora and fauna.



History and Traditions

In addition to its importance as the home of more than 500,000 plant and animal species, Costa Rica is known for its tradition of pacifism and the fact that it has enjoyed a solidly democratic society of more than a century.

Following a brief civil war in 1948, the country's leaders decided to abolish its army and it has since avoided the violence and destruction of internal conflicts.

Costa Rica's history is reflected by its people. The "Ticos," as Costa Ricans are known in the region, are the product of centuries of immigration and mixing that began with the arrival of Spanish colonists in the worlds of the Bribri, Cabecar, Maleku, Boruca and other indigenous peoples. To a smaller degree, the country has been shaped by immigrants from other parts of Europe and Latin America, as well as by its previous Chinese and Afro-Caribbean colonies.

Costa Rican culture reflects its diverse roots. The country conserves Catholic religious traditions that arrived from Spain together with indigenous influences such as its popular tortillas and tamales and traditional handicrafts made from leather, wood, clay and other local materials.



Coasts, Valleys, Volcanoes and Values

The friendliness that is common in Latin America combined with local traditions of harmonious existence and hospitality create the distinctive Tico character.

Travelers find the local people gregarious, helpful and quick to smile. They will also notice the diversity among the Tico groups throughout their travel within the country.

On the Caribbean coast, with its vast expanses of wilderness and idyllic beaches, travelers can visit Afro-Caribbean communities known for their friendly ambiance. That region's densely forested mountains, on the other hand, hold the scattered indigenous communities of the Bribri and Cabecar peoples who preserve a tradition of living in harmony with Mother Nature.

On the other side of the country, along its extensive Pacific coast, travelers can experience the wildlife of the tropical dry forest and sunny beaches. In the meantime they can enjoy the mixture of Spanish heritage and the culinary and folk traditions of indigenous peoples such as the Chorotega and Boruca.

The mountains of northern Costa Rica hold world-famous Monteverde, known for its luxuriant cloud forests and spectacular biodiversity. Costa Rica's Monteverde community is unique as it was founded by Quakers who immigrated from the United States, and who have since taken great care of the area's nature.

At the geographic heart of the country is the Central Valley, holding Costa Rica's most populous cities. Through their cosmopolitan nature and Spanish influences, their urban areas offer an exceptional tourist experience.

The valley is surrounded by volcanoes, such as the Poás and its blue crater lake, Irazú and Turrialba, all topped by national parks. Their mineral-rich slopes hold a verdant patchwork of farmland, traditional communities and natural landscapes.

Throughout this region and the mountains to the south, the traveler will encounter the vast expanses of coffee farms. Now widely recognized for the quality of its beans, Costa Rica has developed its coffee production since its early years as a new republic. Costa Rican coffee fetches high prices on the international market and a growing number of its farms have been certified as sustainable.

Southern Costa Rica holds some of the country's most impressive natural sites. The Osa Peninsula, for example, is a remote but vibrant wilderness of lush forests and pristine beaches that is considered one of the most biologically intense places on Earth.

Southwest Costa Rica also includes Cocos Island, located 330 miles (532 km) off the Pacific coast, which has been declared both a national park and a World Heritage Site. The biological wealth of the surrounding sea has turned the Cocos Island into a popular destination for researchers and divers alike, while the isle's natural beauty offers an unforgettable place for its visitors.

7 Seven Provinces

Costa Rica consists of seven provinces, each with its own characteristics:

CANOPY TOUR: A UNIQUE ECO-ADVENTURE

AMAZING DIVING EXPERIENCES



COSTA RICA MAP





LIMÓN PROVINCE DISPLAYS A UNIQUE SIDE OF COSTA RICA

LIMÓN

Spread across the country's eastern half, this province holds the Caribbean coast and an array of attractions. Limón extends over 3,547 square miles (9,188 square km) of humid lowlands and lush mountain slopes and is bordered by a long Caribbean coastline, making it the country's fourth largest province. Within that area lie gorgeous beaches and several protected areas, among them



GREAT SURF SPOTS

Tortuguero National Park, and the La Amistad International Park and the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge.

Limón is a cultural cocktail that befits its tropical climate, with strong indigenous, Afro-Caribbean and Chinese influences interacting amidst enchanting landscapes.

SUNRISE IN PUNTA UVA, SOUTH CARIBBEAN





TAMARINDO BEACH

GUANACASTE

The country's northwest corner belongs to Guanacaste province, famous for its beaches, which have more hotels and tourism infrastructure than those of other regions.

Guanacaste became part of Costa Rica in 1824, when its inhabitants voted to join the country in the so-called "Annexation of Nicoya." Like Limón, the peninsula is bordered by a long coastline, with an array of beaches washed by the Pacific Ocean's warm waters.

The country's second largest province, Guanacaste stretches eastward from the coast to the misty peaks of several volcanoes, such as Rincón de la Vieja, Miravalles and Tenorio. Between those peaks and coast, lies a vast savannah that has been a cultural cradle for countless centuries.

Guanacaste was once the territory of the Chorotega Indians, whose heritage can be found in its traditional cuisine, handicrafts and folklore. Most of its lowlands have been converted to pasture for cattle, or have been planted with rice and other grains, whereas its mountains hold hydroelectric, geothermal and wind power facilities.

CHOROTEGA CERAMICS



ENJOY A BREATHTAKING SUNSET AFTER A SURFING SESSION



PUNTARENAS

Stretching to the south of Guanacaste is this extensive province – the country's largest – which comprises the rest of its Pacific coast, one of the country's principal ports and an array of national parks.

Manuel Antonio National Park combines tropical forests, beaches and the aquamarine sea, whereas the larger Corcovado National Park, farther to the south, is one of the country's biologically richest areas. Puntarenas also holds the previously mentioned Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve.

Residents of Puntarenas conserve indigenous traditions of the Chorotega, Boruca and Brunca peoples, such as the "Danza de los Diablos" – an annual folk event – and colorful handicrafts.

SUMMER SUNSET



PUNTARENAS FROM THE AIR



FOR BIKERS WHO APPRECIATE CHALLENGING CLIMBS

ALAJUELA

Known by Costa Ricans as the “City of Mangos,” Alajuela is the capital of a province known for its rich farmland and warm climate, which facilitate the cultivation of that tropical fruit.

Alajuela province covers 19% of the national territory and holds popular natural attractions such as Poás Volcano National Park – one of the country’s most visited sites. To the north of that peak lies Arenal Volcano National Park, known for its active volcano and nearby

Tabacón Hot Springs and Lake Arenal. Even farther to the north is Caño Negro Wildlife Reserve, a great spot for bird watching.

Alajuela also holds some prime examples of Costa Rican culture, such as the painted oxcarts of Sarchí and the bits of history preserved in the Juan Santamaría Museum, named after its national hero.

LA FORTUNA HOT SPRINGS



ARENAL VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK



OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS BASILICA

CARTAGO

Once the heart of colonial Costa Rica, Cartago was the first city established in Latin America by the Spanish conquistadores in 1562. Cartago was Costa Rica's original capital, but after it was severely damaged by an earthquake, the seat of government was moved to San José.

Consequently the province is packed with history. In Cartago are found the Ruins of Santiago de Apóstol, a church that was under construction when an earthquake hit in 1910. Other historic buildings include the



IRAZU VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK

original library, the Colegio San Luis Gonzaga, Quircot Church and the Pirie Building.

To the north of the city towers Irazú Volcano, the country's highest Volcano. The slopes are covered with the vegetable and dairy farms for which Cartago is known. The province also holds Tapantí National Park, Turrialba Volcano National Park and the Guayabo National Monument – one of the country's largest and most important archaeological sites.



HEREDIA

While it may be one of Costa Rica's smallest provinces, Heredia has no shortage of treasures. Just north of the city of Heredia, a town called Barva, for example, holds a picturesque collection of colonial houses.

The province's natural assets include the vast wilderness of Braulio Carrillo National Park, the smaller protected areas of the adjacent Sarapiquí region, and Barra del Colorado National Wildlife Reserve, near the country's border with Nicaragua.

Beside Heredia's grand wealth of colonial and natural sites, it also holds one of the principle coffee production regions in Costa Rica. The city's picturesque coffee farms are attractions in the own right, and hold both an important economic and cultural roles in the nation's history.



COFFEE HARVEST



"EL FORTIN" NATIONAL MONUMENT



EARLY EVENING SKY OVER SAN JOSÉ

SAN JOSÉ

San José is the country's transportation hub, from where travelers can easily reach its other provincial capitals and natural attractions. It is thus a convenient point of departure for exploring the Costa Rica's varied and beautiful regions.

The Costa Rican capital is also the seat of its smallest, but most densely populated province. Home to nearly 1.5 million inhabitants and day visitors, it is consequently the country's most diverse province. Its people share a friendly nature that visitors are quick to note. "Green" Visit Suggestion:



NATIONAL THEATER.

San José is surrounded by hills and mountains covered with a verdant mantle of coffee farms and forest patches that counterbalance the urban sprawl and hustle bustle. As the capital city, it has the country's best museums and various architectural gems, such as the National Theater.



SAN JOSÉ DOWNTOWN POST OFFICE

Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)

The Certification for Sustainable Tourism Program - CST - is a product of the Costa Rican Tourism Board (ICT). The CST was designed to differentiate businesses of the tourism sector, based on the degree to which they comply with a sustainable model of natural, cultural and social resource management.

CST is regulated by the Costa Rican National Accreditation Commission and consists of a scale of 5 "levels" of sustainable tourism achievement.

CST is a program that seeks to categorize and certify each tourism company according to the degree to which its operations comply to a model of sustainability. To this effect, four fundamental aspects are evaluated:

1. Environmental parameters

Evaluates the interaction between the company and its surrounding natural habitat.

2. Infrastructure and services

Evaluates the management policies and the operational systems exclusive for lodging companies and its infrastructure, regarding the energy saving, water polluting and waste handling policies and technology.

2. Service Management

Comprises the process by means of which, the Tour Operators considering all the elements internal and external, and designs a turistic product in accordance with the trends of the market and the proper characteristics of the country and places in where goes to operate.

3. External Clients

Evaluates the interaction of the company with its clients in terms of how much it allows and invites the client to be an active contributor to the company's policies of sustainability.

4. Socio-economic environment

Evaluates the identification and interaction of the establishment with the adjacent communities. For example, it analyzes the degree in that the tourist companies answer to the growth and development of the region, with the generation of new employment or the achievement of benefits in pro of the collectivity.

We invite you to discover the wonders of Costa Rica, using CST certified companies. Attached to this Green Passport you can find a list of the present certified operations. These companies have been endorsed by the Costa Rican Tourism Board. If you should be interested in more information about CST, please visit : www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr



SERVICES AND EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS:

National emergency numbers and services:

Countrywide Emergency:	911
(Free on all mobile networks)	
Office of Consumer Affairs	800-258-7474
	or 2258-8585
Office of the Public Advocate	176
Drug Enforcement	800-87267486
Local Time Information	112
(for GSM cell phones dial *112)	
Local Directory Assistance	113
International Directory Assistance	124
Commercial Directory Assistance	155
Cell phone service inquiries	193
Inquiries about international phone call charges	2224-2900
Public telephone service	800-220-9-220
RACSA Technical Support (24/7 service)	800-6283427
International Operator Assistance	116

USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION:

International Airlines

Avianca	2441-2776
Continental Airlines	0-800-044-0005
Taca	2299-8222
Mexicana	2295-6969

Local Airlines

Nature Air	2220-3054
SANSA	2221-9414

International Bus travel

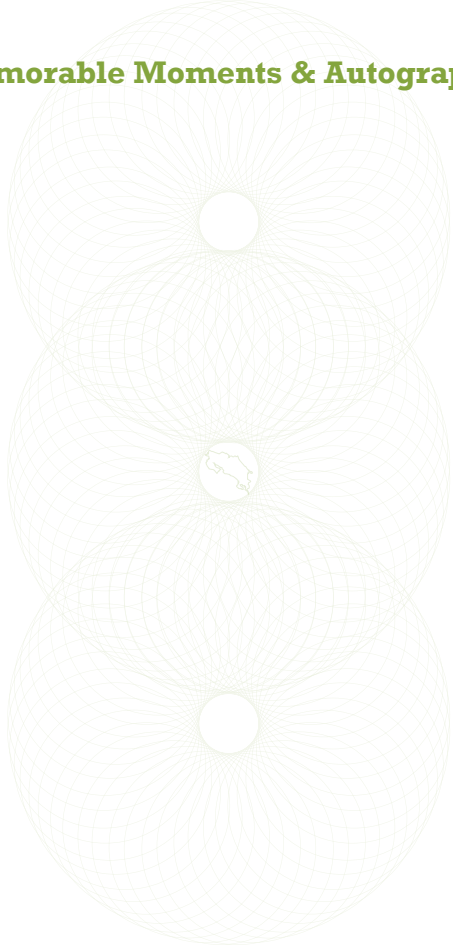
Tica Bus	2221-0006
Panaline	2256-8721

Local Bus travel

Fortuna	2255-0567
Golfoito	2221-4214
Heredia	2233-8392
Liberia	2222-1650
Limón	2222-0610
Nicoya	2222-2666
Nosara y Garza	2685-5352
Palmar Norte	2221-4214
Puerto Jiménez	2257-4121
Puntarenas	2222-8231
Quepos y Manuel Antonio	2223-5567
Sámara y Carrillo	2222-2666
San Ramón	2222-0064
Tamarindo	2222-2666
Volcán Irazú	2530-1064
Volcán Poás	2222-5325

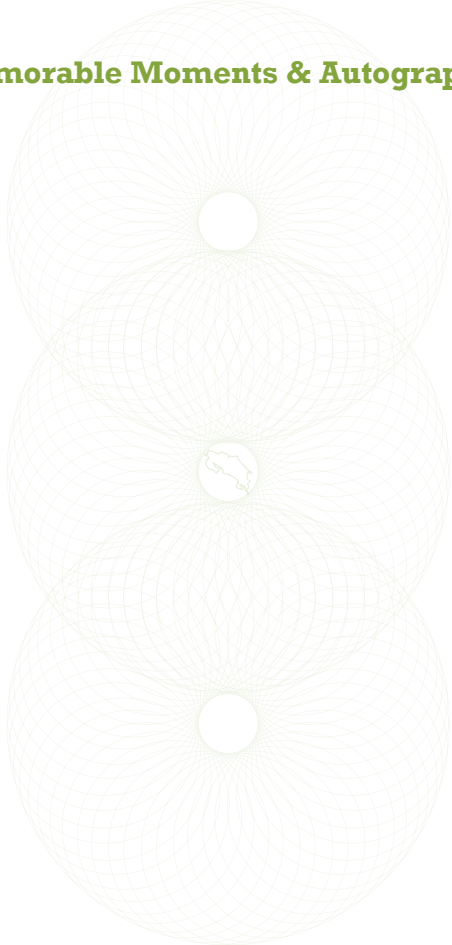
Memorable Moments & Autographs

SIGNATURE PAGE



Memorable Moments & Autographs

SIGNATURE PAGE



Memorable Moments & Autographs

CST CERTIFIED HOTELS AND TOUR OPERATORS

PROVINCIA WEBSITE

ALAJUELA

• Hoteles

Hotel Villa Blanca	5	www.villablanca-costarica.com
Hotel Arenal Kioro	4	www.hotelarenalkioro.com
Rancho Margot	4	www.ranchoMargot.org
Hotel Arenal Springs	3	www.hotelarenalsprings.com
Hotel Buena Vista	3	www.hotelbuenavistacr.com
Hotel El Rodeo	3	www.elrodeohotel.com
Hotel La Garza del Platanar	3	www.hotellagarza.com
Hotel Los Lagos Spa y Resort	3	www.hotelloslagos.com
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Hotel Paradise Mountain Lodge	3	www.americasparadise.net
Hotel Tabacon Resort	3	www.tabacon.com



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