

# Wonders of Costa Rica

January 8 – 17, 2024 • 10 Days • \$3975

Costa Rica is an explosion of life! With a seashore to mountaintop topography, a tropical climate, and a geographical footprint as a land bridge between the Americas, it boasts a hospitable 12 ecological zones and 30 types of rain forests.

NOTE: This tour is now closed to new travelers.

[Contact Us](#)

[Tour Type: Classic Curated](#)

## OVERVIEW

No other country on the planet has a greater number of species per square mile or offers so many fun and educational pursuits for the traveler in such a small package!

Our outstanding itinerary is filled with long-tested WAI favorites such as a central highlands coffee experience, a fun and educational chocolate tour (the 6th food group?!), a visit to a colorful butterfly conservancy, an early morning canal ride and walk in Tortuguero National Park, Cahuita jungle walking with howler monkeys, and several other Costa Rican “pura vida” (full of life) adventures!

Our hotels in particular on this tour are rural delights, with expansive gardens and beautiful locales, providing a wonderful retreat after a full day’s activities and a relaxing haven from which to observe the wildlife for which Costa Rica is so well known.

## Highlights:

- **Central Highlands** – with a coffee tour and lunch at a family-owned coffee plantation. Coffee is the bean that raised Costa Rica out of Central American poverty! NOTE: We will be in the Central Highlands for several days, but the coffee tour is an optional activity on Day 1 for travelers who arrive a day early on Day 0.
- **Arenal** – a picturesque, perfectly conical volcano whose slopes have provided a haven for an astonishing number of species
- **Tortuguero** – two days to explore this jungle hideaway for iguanas, monkeys, sloths, and toucans. Cruising through rain forest canals at dawn on the lookout for critters is a once in a lifetime experience!
- **Cahuita National Park** – boasting a memorable “dry jungle” trail along the Caribbean in the company of monkeys and other Costa Rican critters

## Including:

- Airport to hotel group transfers on first and last day
- All land travel by motorcoach as outlined

- Superior tourist-class hotel accommodations or better in remote, uniquely Costa Rican settings (all facilities en suite)
- 20 meals: 9 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 8 dinners as listed (BLD)
- 9 walk routes
- Walking fees (5 stamps) for those collecting IVV credit (pending sanction approval)
- Cultural & historical expertise of a local guide throughout
- WAI guide service throughout - 2 guides
- All tipping for local guides, coach drivers and group meals
- Pricing is based on double occupancy; a limited number of single rooms are available for a supplement for \$675. We also provide a roommate matching service.

### **Activities/Visits to:**

- Sarchi Oxcart Shop
- Butterfly Conservatory
- Arenal Sky Tram
- El Silencio Mirador Reserve
- Tirimbina Rainforest Center Chocolate Tour
- Jungle river cruise to Tortuguero
- Roundtrip boat transfer to Tortuguero Village
- Tortuguero wildlife canal cruise
- Tortuguero National Park
- Roundtrip boat transfer to Cerro Tortuguero
- Cahuita National Park
- Escazú Encanto de la Piedra Blanca Sugar Cane Mill and Mascarade visit
- More fun stops than we can list!

### **Optional Excursions:**

- Central Highlands Coffee Tour (Day 1)
- Arenal Sky Trek zipline experience (Day 4)

- [360.260.9393](tel:360.260.9393)
- [Email Us](#)

## **Itinerary**

*Click on each day for more details. (BLD) refers to meals included – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner.*

### [Day 1 ~January 8: Arrive Costa Rica \(D\)](#)

Our Costa Rica Adventure begins today as travelers arrive into Costa Rica's Juan Santamaría International Airport. Our hotel is set beside a lovely pool amidst tropical vegetation in nearby La Garita. The timing of our Welcome Orientation meeting and dinner will be provided once all travelers' flight itineraries have been received.

Central Highlands Coffee Tour: Travelers who opt to arrive a day early into this Central

American paradise are invited to join us for a coffee plantation tour! A morning drive takes us through pastoral panoramas of the Central Highlands to a small, local coffee plantation. Here, we learn about the potent little bean that revolutionized Costa Rica's economy in the 19th century, then share lunch with our hospitable hosts in their pleasant plantation setting, a delightful cultural connection!

This excursion is about 5 to 6 hours long and may be offered in the morning. Price \$145

#### [Day 2~January 9: La Garita - Arenal area \(BD\)](#)

*Walk #1: Arenal Waterfall Walk - 5 km, rated 2B*

More scenic Central Highlands driving takes us north for a stop in the village of Sarchi to observe traditional methods of crafting wooden coffee carts, and browse during one of the rare shopping opportunities on this trip.

From Sarchi, we continue to Arenal Volcano, stopping for lunch in one of the small towns en route. Our home for the next two evenings is a marvelous eco-lodge tucked away in secondary rainforest in the shadow of one of the planet's more active volcanoes.

Upon arrival, a walk through the grounds to Danta Waterfall is available. The trail takes us from the lodge grounds to the Danta River to view the waterfall, and back through rolling farmland to the lodge.

The optional after-dinner activity is hunting for tiny, colorful Costa Rican poison arrow frogs!

#### [Day 3~January 10: Activities in Arenal area \(BD\)](#)

*Walk #2: Lodge Rainforest Walk - 2 km, rated 2B*

*Walk #3: Butterfly Conservancy - 1 km, rated 1B*

*Walk #4: El Silencio Walk - 5 km, rated 3B*

After breakfast this morning, a wildlife walk guided by lodge staff shows us more about how life is hidden in plain sight in a Costa Rican rainforest.

Later this morning, we visit a butterfly conservatory that houses the largest exhibition of butterflies in Costa Rica. Here we learn about the butterfly lifecycle, see butterflies from all four of the Arenal region's climate zones, and learn about butterfly, amphibian (i.e. frog), and rainforest regeneration research being done at the center.

On the opposite side of Arenal Volcano, El Silencio Rainforest Walk takes us into thick tropical jungle that opens onto breathtaking views of Lake Arenal and the volcano! Along the trail, watch for raucous howler monkeys, curious coatimundis, tiny whizzing hummingbirds, and brilliant Blue Morpho butterflies.

#### [Day 4~January 11: Arenal - Sarapiquí \(BLD\)](#)

### *Walk #5: Chocolate Rainforest Walk - 4 km, rated 2C*

We leave our lovely Arenal eco-lodge with regrets this morning, but more Adventure awaits just around the corner.

The morning activity takes us into the jungle canopy on the Sky Tram, Trek, and Walk excursion—an excellent aerial tram/zipline experience with walking as a third choice. Trammers and Trekkers ascend through the Arenal jungle on the slow-moving Sky Tram, enjoying expansive views and up-close-and-personal connections to the rainforest canopy. Meanwhile Walkers traverse the rain forest below the tram line and zipliners on trails and hanging bridges.

Arenal Sky Trek Zipline: At the far end of the tram line, those ready for an adrenaline rush return via Sky Trek—whizzing through the jungle on ziplines with hearts pumping. Those preferring the more sedate pace of the Sky Tram have time to enjoy the views before returning by Sky Tram over the same route to the bottom station, there to be reunited with the Sky Trekkers and Sky Walkers. The Sky Tram and Sky Walk experiences are included; the Sky Trek zipline is an optional activity. Price \$80

Next, we board the bus for a drive to Sarapiquí, a region in northern Costa Rica boasting some of the country's richest pockets of untouched forest.

The afternoon activity is an enchanting visit to Tirimbina Rainforest Center. Here, on a plot of land that was once a cacao-growing plot, our guide shares the intriguing process of transforming cacao into chocolate, with the tantalizing possibility of sharing a few samples!

Following this fascinating hands-on demonstration, the Chocolate Rainforest Walk takes us through a rainforest nature reserve, crossing several bridges and introducing us to multiple ecosystems.

### [Day 5~January 12: Sarapiquí - Tortuguero \(BLD\)](#)

### *Walk #6: Tortuguero Village Walk - 4 km, rated 1B*

Following an early morning drive to the Caribbean side of the divide, we board a jungle riverboat that winds through a labyrinthine network of canals and rivers to Tortuguero National Park.

Our home for the next two nights is nestled in the Caribbean jungle, accessible only by boat or plane. This little strip of land sandwiched between the Caribbean and a watery world of lagoons and canals is caught in a time warp—no cars, no streets, and few signs of post 19th century life. Our “rooms” are all separate units, placed upon stilts in the jungle accessible on a raised boardwalk.

Following lunch, join us for a boat ride across the river to walk into Tortuguero village. Tortuguero is a watery paradise hiding on the north Caribbean Coast of Costa Rica

shrouded in its own isolated reality. The 35 kilometers of black sand beach next to the tiny hamlet is the nesting site of more endangered green sea turtles than anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere (nesting season is later in the summer). Our walk includes a short visit to the humble yet interesting Sea Turtle Conservancy.

A return boat ride brings us home to our lodge to rest, take in the ever-changing panorama of the forest around us, and join the group for dinner.

#### [Day 6~January 13: Activities in Tortuguero \(BLD\)](#)

*Walk #7: Pachira-Aninga Tortuguero Nature Walk - 2 km, rated 1A*

*Walk #8: Cerro Tortuguero & San Francisco Walk - 3 km, rated 3B*

An unforgettable morning wildlife cruise takes us in pursuit of toucans, sloths, iguanas, monkeys, and other Costa Rican critters parading through this wildlife wonderland!

A late morning walk on our lodge's nature trail provides another intriguing window into the vibrant life, sometimes lethal, waiting to be discovered in these Caribbean rainforests.

Later this afternoon, an ascent of Cerro Tortuguero on a new, easy-to-navigate walkway finishes with a stroll through the humble settlement of San Francisco, housing immigrants from nearby Nicaragua drawn to tourism jobs in Tortuguero.

#### [Day 7~January 14: Tortuguero - Puerto Viejo \(BD\)](#)

We leave Tortuguero this morning for a return journey downriver.

After a rendezvous with our bus, we stop for lunch, then continue further south along the Caribbean. Our destination is the laid-back south Caribbean town of Puerto Viejo near Cahuita National Park.

Time moves slow in this isolated corner of Costa Rica as well-it's a great spot to unplug and unwind by the pool!

#### [Day 8~January 15: Activities from Puerto Viejo \(B\)](#)

*Walk #9: Cahuita National Park Walk - 9 km, rated 1B*

Today's trail begins with a delightful couple of kilometers on a boardwalk through deserted rainforest. The remainder of the path then winds along a palm-lined trail through a completely different kind of Costa Rica jungle - a "dry rainforest".

The route through Cahuita National Park parallels a crystalline, sapphire sea offering opportunities to spot a menagerie of slinking sloths, brilliant butterflies, curious coatimundis, mischievous white-faced capuchin monkeys, and any number of winged denizens of the park.

Late afternoon is free to enjoy the laid-back vibe in town or lounge around the pool back at our lodge directly across the road from the beach. Dinner is on your own so feel free to explore the possibilities near the our lodge or stay “home” and eat in the lovely lodge restaurant.

#### [Day 9~January 16: Puerto Viejo - Escazu \(BD\)](#)

We leave the Caribbean today to return to the Central Highlands.

The day’s main activity offers cultural connections in the colorful mountain town of Escazú. A sugar cane mill visit here provides a demonstration of traditional sugar production in Costa Rica. Don Gerardo’s masquerade workshop then opens a fun window into Costa Rican culture by demonstrating the process of creating these colorful traditional “puppets” used to celebrate festivals and parades.

This evening, we stay in a lovely boutique hotel near Escazu. Join us tonight for a Farewell Dinner to reminisce about our explorations throughout captivating Costa Rica!

#### [Day 10~January 17: Depart Costa Rica \(B\)](#)

We leave Costa Rica this morning on a return flight to the USA with fond memories of our adventures in this land of breathtaking beauty, diversity, and wonder!

## **Before You Book**

*Click on each heading for more details.*

#### [How Do I Lock in My Place on This Adventure?](#)

To register, a non-refundable \$300 deposit is required to hold your spot. A final payment is due 90 days before departure and is non-refundable after the due date. You will receive a prompt email from us 2 to 3 weeks in advance.

Soon after registration, an “Adventure Advice” email will be sent with critical information on flight arrangements as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review this Adventure Advice email.

Please follow this link to read our full [General Tour Conditions](#).

#### [What is a Classic Curated Tour?](#)

With help from local experts and walking guides, these itineraries are crafted with extensive on-site planning by WAI tour planners.

When designing Classic Curated Tours, our objective is to capture the essence of a destination—the history, culture, and natural wonders unique to that part of the world. We then build activities and walks that take us *inside* these characteristics.

Yes, these tours are educational, but they are also interactive and immersive; walking gets us off the bus and penetrates local cultures to not only see, but also touch, smell, and feel these special spaces.

Along the way, interactions with locals amplify the experience by sharing insights into the magic of that particular location.

### [Walk Ratings](#)

We generally walk at a pace of 2 to 3 miles per hour. Several walks on this trip are oriented more towards education, and therefore take longer due to stops for guide commentary. Nature walks, on the other hand, generally continue at a steadier pace because we're stopping less to talk.

In most cases, we are not "strolling." We are walking at a relaxed but steady pace. Your experience will be significantly affected by your level of physical fitness. If not walking regularly at home, we strongly recommend that you make a priority of "training" beforehand in order to both enjoy the trip and avoid medical issues due to overexertion. If you have questions about your ability to participate, please call our office at 1.360.260.9393.

We have adopted a walk difficulty rating system which contains a numeric indicator for trail incline and an alpha indicator for trail terrain. The explanation for this system is presented on the table below:

#### **INCLINE**

1. Minimal hills or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: <200 feet.
2. Some moderate hills and stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 200-1000 feet.
3. Some significant hill or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 1000-2000 feet.

#### **TERRAIN**

- A. Almost entirely on pavement.
- B. A significant part of the route is on well-groomed trails with very few obstacles.
- C. A significant part of the route is on somewhat difficult terrain (rocky / rooted paths or soft sand).

### [How Is Airfare Arranged?](#)

The official start and finish points for this Adventure are our beginning and ending hotels near Juan Santamaría International Airport in San Jose, Costa Rica (airport code SJO).

Airport to hotel shuttles will be provided on the first and last day.

We recommend that you contact Laura Pfahler, the travel agent we work with, to help book your flight arrangements. In this age of airfare complications and airport uncertainty, using a travel agent is a good investment! More details about flight arrangements and travel



agent contact information will be provided in an Adventure Advice PDF by email after you register for the Adventure. Please do not book your airfare prior to receiving these flight details from us!

- Laura Pfahler: 503.434.6401 or [llp@wtpdx.com](mailto:llp@wtpdx.com)

### [Travel Insurance](#)

WAI believes strongly in the importance of travel insurance for financial and medical protection from any number of unforeseen circumstances that can arise before departure or during your Adventure. Many travel insurance providers are available for you to consider. Laura Pfahler and Sharon Mitchell of World Travel Inc. are travel agents who provides air travel and insurance services to many WAI travelers.

Laura Pfahler: 503-434-6401 or [llp@wtpdx.com](mailto:llp@wtpdx.com)

Sharon Mitchell: 971-261-2091 or [smitchell@wtpdx.com](mailto:smitchell@wtpdx.com)

Check out [Insurance Tips](#) from World Travel for a short introduction to travel insurance. (NOTE: WAI receives no commission or financial remuneration from World Travel Inc.).

Be aware that some travel insurance policies contain time-sensitive provisions (i.e. some benefits, such as coverage of pre-existing conditions, are available only if the policy is purchased within a certain number of days of the purchase of the travel package). In addition, remember that airfare is not covered by any travel insurance policy you may have purchased for the tour.

As always, do some shopping to ensure you are getting the best value. Using the [SquareMouth.com](http://SquareMouth.com) website can be a good way to compare pricing.

Other options include:

- Allianz
- Betins
- Travel Guard
- Travel Insured International

WAI bears no responsibility for travel insurance benefits advertised by various credit card companies. If you are relying on this type of benefit for insurance, we advise you to verify coverage types and limits and that your purchase does in fact qualify you for this insurance.

*NOTE: We suggest purchasing from a reputable, well-established insurance company (avoid buying insurance from an unknown company found only online). Travelers interested in purchasing "cancel for any reason" insurance coverage should be careful to check pricing and terms BEFORE they register for a tour. Recent changes in the international travel landscape has caused changes in the policies of some insurance companies, and made the*



*purchase of this particular type of policy even more time-sensitive.*

### [What if WAI Cancels the Tour](#)

Walking Adventures International reserves the right to cancel this tour departure with fewer than 15 participants, in which case registered participants will receive a 100% refund of payments received.

This refund policy contains one exclusion. Many suppliers require non-refundable deposits as a condition of booking services. Though it is rare, unforeseen circumstances can force us to cancel a tour. In cases where supplier's non-refundable policies are imposed, WAI attempts to retrieve as much of these deposits as possible but cannot guarantee a 100% refund. In cases where full refunds cannot be obtained for a cancelled tour, we will do our best to transfer unrefunded money as traveler credits to be applied to a future tour to that destination.

### [Wellness Procedures for This Tour](#)

Our approach to wellness on tour has traditionally been to encourage travelers to:

- Focus on health before the tour so you start healthy.
- Pace yourself while on tour; travel is inherently stimulating and can produce adrenalin boosts that mask energy drain. Guard your energy reserves and consider the length of the trip and whether to opt out of some activities and/or walks.
- Be self-aware. If you feel yourself tiring or feel a bug coming on, take precautions to block it (e.g. extra rest, extra doses of vitamin C, etc).
- If you feel a bug coming on or if you take ill, distance yourself from others when possible.
- If you feel ill, isolate yourself towards the back of the bus and away from others and please wear a mask.

Click [WAI Wellness on Tour Policy](#) to view the WAI policy on Wellness on Tour.

### [What Happens Next?](#)

Soon after registration, an "Adventure Advice" email will be sent with critical information on flight arrangements as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review this Adventure Advice email.

A final payment is due 90 days before departure (October 10, 2023) and is non-refundable after the due date. You will receive a prompt email from us a week or two in advance. Please see our [General Tour Conditions](#) for the full terms and conditions for participation in this Adventure.

Around 2-3 weeks before departure, you will receive a final email packet with details of the program, including hotel names and contact information, a list of fellow travelers, and a more detailed daily schedule.

Take a few minutes to peruse the enclosed itinerary. Walking is still and always the best way to experience our world. Join us for this memorable Walking Adventure program through the Costa Rica—Land of Natural Wonders!



## Adventure Pace

**Tour Pace:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Walk Challenge:** 1 2 3 4 5

[About Adventure Pace](#)

### Adventure Pace

How much Adventure do you want? Here are a few features to help gauge the following factors on each tour.

**Tour Pace:** On a scale of 1 (slowest pace) to 5 (fastest pace), we've rated the following factors: number of 1-night hotels; driving miles per day; fullness of schedule; mid-tour airline flights; high elevation setting; and average amount of walking per day.

**Walk Challenge:** This number represents an average walk difficulty rating for the tour using a scale of 1 (easiest) to 5 (hardest).

[Contact Us](#)

## Important Info



## Group Size

24 traveler maximum



## Accommodations

Tourist-class hotel accommodations or better in remote, uniquely Costa Rican settings (all facilities en suite)



## Meals

Breakfasts included with a selection of lunches and dinners. Letters BLD indicate which meals are included.



## Airfare

Not Included. Official start and finish point is Juan Santamaría International Airport in San Jose, Costa Rica (airport code SJO).



## Transportation

Included. 50 seat bus for more than 19 travelers. 26 seat bus for 19 or less.



## Traveler Age

Our travelers usually range from 50–75 years of age. All ages welcome!

## Your Guides



**Todd and Chrissy Jones** have traveled in Asia, Europe, and North and South America, and are immensely grateful for opportunities to discover and appreciate new environments and cultures.

During the school year, Todd teaches high school history, government and economics, and Chrissy works as a physical therapist supporting students with physical disabilities.

Todd & Chrissy will be joined by **Oscar Vargas**, a local guide throughout the Costa Rica tour. They look forward to sharing this land of natural wonders with you!





Over 20 ago, Dan Friesen, WAI owner, met **Oscar Vargas** on the first WAI adventure in Costa Rica. On that tour, he provided excellent service as our coach driver.

Oscar has since expanded his skills and become an excellent tour guide, offering this window into his love of sharing Costa Rica. *“Growing up with the most incredible number of species of flora and fauna gave me a unique passion to share Costa Rica with visitors. For more than 25 years I have helped people explore the special culture, history, gastronomy, national parks, volcanos, and all the magic of the ecosystems. As an ambassador of the land of “Pura Vida”, I love to call visitors ‘amigos’.”*