



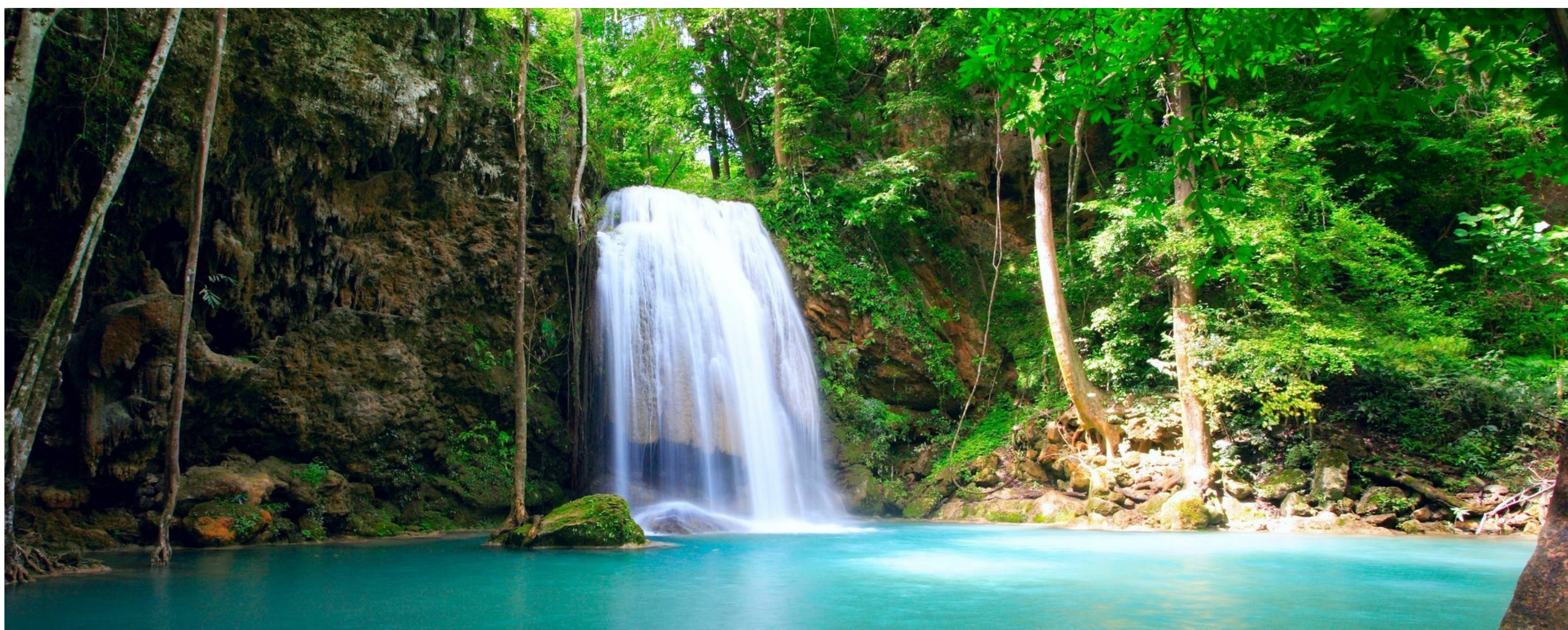
# Costa Rica

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HISTORY





The first European explorer to encounter Costa Rica was the Great Navigator himself, Christopher Columbus. The day was September 18, 1502, and Columbus was making his fourth and final voyage to the New World. As he was setting anchor off shore, a crowd of local Carib Indians paddled out in canoes and greeted his crew warmly. Later, the golden bands that the region's inhabitants wore in their noses and ears would inspire the Spaniard Gil Gonzalez Davila to name the country Costa Rica, or Rich Coast.



## In The Beginning

Costa Rica's history starts with the movement of tribes southwards from North America during the last Ice Age between 13,000 and 17,000 years ago. The first evidence of human settlement in Costa Rica comes from around 10,000 BC (12,000-years ago). That's far earlier than originally thought. Indeed, the 12,000-year-old settlements found in 2016 by the Reventazon River are the oldest evidence of human life found in Central America so far.

Between then and the European arrival in the 15th century, Costa Rica was home to at least 25 indigenous groups. Each group had its own culture and way of living.



## Juan Santamaria

Juan Santamaria was born August 29, 1831 and joined the army as a drummer. He became a hero in 1856, when, in the middle of the battle against William Walker and the filibusters, he took a torch and burned down the house where the enemy was hiding. Losing his life for his nation, he became one of the most famous people in Costa Rica. The country erected a large statue in the middle of a park in the City of Alajuela. Costa Ricans joke about his feat and say he had to literally be pushed into doing what he did. That is why ticos call him “El Empujado ” or “pushed one.”



## Costa Rican Civil War

The Costa Rican civil war erupted in 1948, after incumbent Dr. Rafael Angel Calderon and the United Social Christian Party refused to relinquish power after losing the presidential election. An exile named Jose Maria (Don Pepe) Figueres Ferrer managed to defeat Calderon in about a month, and he later proved to be one of Costa Rica's most influential leaders, as head of the Founding Junta of the Second Republic of Costa Rica. Under Ferrer's leadership, the Junta made vast reforms in policy and civil rights. Women and blacks gained the vote, the communist party was banned, banks were nationalized, and presidential term limits established. Ferrer was immensely popular, creating a political legacy that firmly cemented Costa Rica's liberal democratic values.







MONEY





Costa Rica's currency is the colon (₡), named after Christopher Columbus. It comes in both paper and coin form. The paper money goes from bills of ₡1,000 (called a "mil" (Spanish for 1,000) or "un rojo" because of the bill's red color) to ₡50,000, but we've never seen anything higher than ₡20,000 come out of the ATM. Coins go from an almost valueless ₡5 to ₡500 ("quinientos" (Spanish for 500)) and are quite heavy for the higher denominations.



## Credit Cards

Most major businesses in Costa Rica accept credit cards; the most commonly accepted are American Express, Visa and MasterCard. Visa is the most widely used card in the country, as it is in much of Central and South America. Even so, you won't be able to use your credit card everywhere – many small businesses in Costa Rica are cash-only, especially in less populated areas. In the country's bigger cities, however – like San Jose and Puerto Limon – it should be easier to find businesses that accept credit cards.

## Debit Cards

Debit and Bank cards are convenient, safe and quick. You'll generally pay between 0 and 1% exchange commission, plus flat fees of \$US 1-3 per transaction.







## Visitors From The USA

Rest assured, American travellers, when it comes to spending money in Costa Rica, USD is widely accepted, as are Costa Rican colones. Unfortunately, CAD, Euros, and other foreign currencies are not accepted by most companies, with the exception of a handful of Costa Rican businesses with international owners who are not averse to accepting payments in currencies native to their home country. Most Costa Rican establishments will not accept USD bills higher than \$20.00 American dollar bills (only in rare cases are \$50.00 American dollar bills accepted).



## ATMs

Most Costa Rican towns have a multitude of banks as there are a surprising amount of bank chains operating in Costa Rica and almost every bank will have an ATM. Machines use Spanish as the language to communicate. Therefore if you do not speak Spanish, you should use a phrase book. Important to note that ATMs of state banks – Banco Nacional (BN), Banco Popular and Banco de Costa Rica (BCR) have restricted hours. Meanwhile, most of the ATMs of private banks operate on a 24-hour basis.



HELPFUL INFO



## Climate

The climate in Costa Rica is hot all year round in the plains and along the coasts, while it's milder in the plateau (in the so-called *tierras templadas*). In the Pacific coast and the plateau there is a dry season (from December to April), and a rainy season (May to November), in which rainfall is abundant, while in the eastern plain and coast the climate is equatorial, with abundant rainfall throughout the year. Temperature variations are low, because the country is located near the Equator, so the main difference between the seasons is related to the rains. Anyway, most of the country is so rainy that it's covered by rainforests. The best time to visit Costa Rica, either for swimming or for exploring its rich environment, runs from January to mid-April, and in particular the months of February and March.

## Electricity

Costa Rica uses 110-volt, 60-cycle electricity, same as the US. Plugs are typically the 2 pronged flat type so US travelers will not typically need a converter or adapter.







## Technology & Communication

ICE (Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad) has been Costa Rica's traditional monopoly provider of telecommunications, internet and electricity services. In the country telephone coverage is extensive. U.S. visitors have experienced difficulty in using their GSM phones in Costa Rica, due to differences in the frequency band used in each country. Internet usage for cellular phones is prevalent in urban areas. Internet cafes are available in some areas (especially in San José), and Wi-Fi in hotels and restaurants continues to expand, particularly in the Central Valley. RACSA, a subsidiary of ICE, has offered 20,000 WiMax connections in Santa Ana, San Jose, Alajuela, Desamparados, Heredia and Cartago.



## Infrastructure & Transport

The infrastructure in Costa Rica today is almost no better than when it rolled out the foreign retiree welcome mat all those years ago. Infrastructure has not met economic growth numbers. Ineffective and insufficient maintenance and investment efforts are the main offenders. The road network is substantial, with more than 35,705-kilometers (22,187-miles) of roads, but most of them in poor conditions. There are only 12% and 56% of paved roads for local and national roads.







## In Case Of An Emergency

In case of emergency, dial 911. You will be able to find a hospital in most of the major cities. Where there are not hospitals, you will find a clinic (clínica), which offer basic medical attention. The Red Cross provides ambulance service throughout Costa Rica - they can be reached directly by calling 128.

## Language

The Spanish language is the official and the most spoken language in Costa Rica, although English is also heard.

This language is very common in the country's most touristic areas so you can speak English at hotels and restaurants as well as hire tour guides who speak in a perfect English. Moreover, in some certain touristic areas, you can even find information leaflets and restaurant menus in English. Furthermore, in certain Caribbean areas, mainly in the province of Limón, it is spoken in English pidgin called Creole English or Creole Limonese, an English variant that was brought in the 19th Century by Jamaican immigrants. The French language is the second most spoken one and it is taught in schools, thus some people understand it.







## LGBT Travel

As far as Latin American countries go, Costa Rica is one of the most open-minded and accepting of LGBTQ+ people. If you are travelling as a lesbian in Costa Rica, you can expect to feel relatively comfortable, but don't expect the same freedoms granted in San Francisco and other metropolitan areas. Despite being a predominantly Catholic country, there has been great support towards the LGBTQ+ community. In 2014, Luis Guillermo Solís became the first president in Costa Rica to raise the pride flag. "This is the house of all Costa Ricans. When we say all Costa Ricans we mean all, without exclusion, without violence, without harassment in absolute respect for the rights of each one," Solís told a crowd of LGBT leaders and advocates during his brief comments on the lawn.

## Religion

Roman Catholicism is the state religion of Costa Rica, and Christian values are present in many aspects of daily life. Town names often begin with San or Santa; familiar expressions include "If God wishes it" and "God bless," and every city has a Catholic church. Evangelical Christians make up the second largest religious group in Costa Rica. Established Protestant denominations, like Methodist or Presbyterian, are uncommon Costa Rica.







## Getting There

Costa Rica has two international airports. Juan Santamaría (SJO), just outside San José, receives the majority of flights, while Daniel Oduber (LIR), near the northern city of Liberia, handles some flights from the US and Canada, plus the odd seasonal flight from the UK. Although there are a few direct flights from Europe, the vast majority of routes pass through the US, meaning that passengers have to comply with US entry requirements, even if merely transiting the country. Airfares always depend on the season, with the highest being around July, August and December to mid-January; you'll get the best prices during the wet summer (May–Nov).



## Driving

If you are planning on driving in Costa Rica, you should be aware that many roads in Costa Rica are in poor condition, however, the natural attractions and amazing landscapes throughout the country, are worth the 'rough' ride. Many of the visitors that opt for a self drive vacation keep coming back to for this type of experience that gives them a deeper flavor of the country by having more interaction with the locals. When you get to Costa Rica you will be able to remain in the country with your car for up to 3 months. If you'd like to stay in Costa Rica after 90 days, you may renew your visa and pay steep import duties or leave the country to another nearby country such as Panama or Nicaragua for at least 72 hours before coming back in to Costa Rica.



THE EXPERIENCE



## Culture

Costa Rican Culture, arts, and traditions have evolved from its rich history, with diverse ethnic and native influences. Famous for being the happiest country in the world, the people of Costa Rica are welcoming and friendly, yet sophisticated and proud. The priorities of the country are evident in its progressive social and environmental policies. Education and healthcare for all are fully supported. Costa Rica is a model of eco-stewardship with more than 25% of its territory preserved from development allowing it to conserve its incredible biodiversity for generations to come. Also, the culture and traditions reveal their passion for democracy, freedom, and equality for all.



## Bucket List

Zipline through the Treetops

Soak in Volcano-Fed Hot Springs

Decompress at All-Natural Spas

Decompress at All-Natural Spas

Walk Through the Cloud Forest

Learn to Surf

Sunset Sailing Cruise

Private Boating Tour in Gulf of Papagayo

Canyoning



# Family Travel Highlights

Turtle viewing in Tortuguero National Park

Horseback riding to Mulguri Waterfall

Canoeing, kayaking, or boat tours on Damas Island

Discovering the quaint town of Quepos near Manuel Antonio National Park

Visiting chocolate factories and farm tours in Puerto Viejo

Snorkeling in Playa Cahuita and Playa Negra

Whale watching and boating in Bellena National Park



# Tourism Authority

Instituto Costarricense de Turismo

Phone: +506 2299-5800 ext. 408

Website: <https://www.ict.go.cr/en/>







## Foods To Try

Casado

Gallo pinto

Chifrijo

Chicharrones

Patacones

Olla de carne

Rondon

Naturales

Cacao fresco

Trits



## Drinks To Try

Refresco

Horchata

Coffee

Limonada con soda

Seaweed shake

Batido

Chili-water

Guacamaya

Guaro and Sour

Chur Chill







## Photography Hot Spots

Poás Volcano National Park

La Fortuna Waterfall

The Guanacaste Beaches

Arenal Volcano

Costa Rica Monteverde

## Souvenirs To Buy

Beautifully patterned color bikinis

Wooden Mask

Pre-Columbian gold jewelry

Bio-Land beauty products

Costa Rican Chocolates

Costa Rican Coffee

Barry Biesanz creations



