



Travel & Discover Costa Rica

Mytanfeet
.com

An insider's guide to exploring
safer, cheaper and trouble free

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A photograph of a man and a woman standing in a lush green field. The man is wearing a black polo shirt with a small logo and has his arm around the woman's shoulder. The woman is wearing a light blue t-shirt. In the background, there are rolling green hills and a large mountain range under a cloudy sky.

About the Authors

The logo for Mytanfeet.com, featuring the text "Mytanfeet" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with ".com" in a smaller, orange font below it. The logo is enclosed in a white rounded rectangle with an orange border.

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We are Yeison and Samantha, the couple behind Mytanfeet. Yeison is a Costa Rican, born in San Jose and grew up in Heredia. Samantha was born and grew up in the United States. In 2012, Samantha moved down to Costa Rica and since then, we have been traveling around Costa Rica and the world together and blogging about it on Mytanfeet. We know it's tricky to find detailed information about traveling in Costa Rica which is why we've put together this free introductory guide. We hope it is useful for your vacation planning!

Yeison and Samantha



Table of Contents

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1 Facts About Costa Rica | 7 Safety Tips |
| 2 When Should I Visit Costa Rica? | 8 Getting Around |
| 3 Weather | 9 Renting a Car |
| 4 Best Places for First Timers | 10 Handling Money |
| 5 Flying to Costa Rica | 11 Resources & Discounts |
| 6 What to Bring | |



1

Facts About Costa Rica

Important facts to know about
Costa Rica before you go

- Costa Rica is not an island. It is a small country in Central America, bordered to the north by Nicaragua and to the south by Panama.
- San Jose is the capital city.
- Costa Rica is its own country, having gained independence from Spain in 1821.
- The official language is Spanish.
- The current population is 5 million.
- Roman Catholic is the main religion.
- Costa Rica is 51,100 sq km (19,653 sq miles) of land and 50,660 sq km (19,559 sq miles) of water.
- Their government is democratic republic.
- Their currency is the Costa Rican colon.
- Time zone is UTC – 6. No daylight savings time.
- Costa Rica is 8-12 degrees above the equator.

- There are 7 provinces, 81 cantons and 472 districts.
- +506 is the country calling code. No area codes.
- There are 26 national parks, 10 biological reserves, 61 wildlife refuges and 31 protected zones.
- 3 natural UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Guanacaste National Park, Coco Island, and La Amistad International Park. 1 cultural: Stone Spheres of Diquis

Here are some interesting facts about Costa Rica:

- Costa Rica became the first country in the American continent to ban recreational hunting in 2012.
- "Costa Rica" means rich coast in Spanish. Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus) named it that when he saw the beauty of the country.
- The country is a leader in renewable energy and has over 300 days in 2017 of using only renewable energy. It wants to become one of the first countries to ban single use plastic.
- Costa Ricans call themselves "Ticos" for men and "Ticas" for women.
- San Jose, the capital city was one of the first in the world to have electricity.
- Costa Rica abolished its army in 1948 after a civil war. They have had not had an army since then, therefore all the money goes towards healthcare and education.



2

When Should I Visit Costa Rica?

The best time to visit Costa Rica will depend on what kind of vacation you're looking for

Weather is one of the most important deciding factors when it comes to the best time to visit Costa Rica.

If you want to escape the rain, visit during dry season. Dry season, or summer, is generally from beginning to December to end of April. This time of the year is the high tourist season. What to know about visiting during this time of year:

1. Rates are higher during this time of year. Most expensive time to travel in Costa Rica.
2. It's crowded. All the snowbirds are here as well.
3. It is very hot! Expect temperatures from 90-100 F (32-38 C) on the coasts.
4. March and April are the hottest months.

5. The Caribbean coast has a different weather pattern. Their summer month is October.

If you're on a budget and don't mind the rain, visit during rainy season, Costa Rica's winter. Rainy season or "green season", is generally from beginning of May to end of November. What to know about visiting during this time of year:



1. Rates are lower during this time of year and has less tourists.
2. There is normally a "little summer" in July when the rain stops for a couple of weeks.
3. September and October are the rainiest months. The rainy months for the Caribbean are June and November.

If you prefer less crowds, visit during shoulder season. These are the transition months of May, June and November until the beginning of December. What to know about visiting during shoulder season:

1. As they are the beginning and end of rainy season, do expect rain.
2. It's a lot less crowded and a bit cheaper.
3. November is when snowbirds start coming down but it's still

- not as crowded.
4. After Thanksgiving up until mid-December is not very busy and there is a lull throughout the country.
 5. This is also a good time to visit on a budget.



If you want a beach vacation:

The best time to visit Costa Rica for a beach vacation is during dry season, particularly January through March and October for the Caribbean. It's sunny for days and you will not have to worry about a drop of rain during your vacation.

If you're on a budget: For budget travelers, the best time to come is during green season. Rates are lower for hotels and car rentals and you can find more promos for tours.

If you want to see wildlife: Interested in whale watching or seeing baby turtles hatch? The rainy season is the best, particularly August to November. Humpback whales, dolphins and sea turtles are commonly seen out in the water and the mass gatherings of mother turtles laying their eggs are the

most intense during that time of year. September and October are the best times of the year to see turtles at Tortuguero, July – November are best to see turtles in Ostional. August and September are the best months to see humpback whales up and down the Pacific coast. For birdwatchers, March to July are the best times in Monteverde to see Resplendant Quetzals as it is their breeding season.

If you want an outdoor adventure vacation: This depends. River rafting is the best right after the start of the heavy rains during green season. Canopy tours can be done all year long but if it is raining too hard, they won't run the lines and it's not that fun to zipline in pouring rain. Hiking is done all year long but rain could hamper your hike during green season and your view at the top may be too cloudy to see anything.



3

Weather

Costa Rica has tropical seasons:
Dry & Rainy

Costa Rica has typical tropical weather with two seasons: dry and rainy. It is 8-12 degrees above the equator so it doesn't experience fall and spring or have snow.

Dry Season

Dry season is generally from beginning of December to end of April in Costa Rica. Some characteristics of dry season are:

- Average temperature on the coasts is low to high 90s (mid-90s to 100s F (35-39 C). Average temperature in San Jose and cities are around low to mid 80's (26-29 C). Gets cool at night.
- High winds and big swells on the Pacific and Caribbean coasts January and February.
- Sun for weeks!
- The Pacific coast gets extremely dry. Trees turn yellow, rivers dry up.

- The hottest months are March and April for most of the country.

Rainy Season

Rainy season is generally from beginning of May to mid-December. Some characteristics of rainy season are:

- Normal rainy season days are sunny in the mornings and rain in the afternoon and evenings.
- Average temperatures are around low 90s (33 C) on the coast. It gets really humid, even on the Pacific coasts where it's normally very dry.
- In Guanacaste and Puntarenas, the mountains turn green after the first few rains.
- It can start raining/storming randomly. It'll be sunny one second and storming the next. Rains can last for just 10 minutes and then it's sunny again.
- Rainy season starts and ends a little bit longer in the high elevation rainforest areas like Bijagua, Monteverde, San Isidro de Perez Zeledon and San Gerardo de Dota.
- The rainiest months are September and October.



- May and June starts seeing the first showers, July lets up a bit and from August on, it starts raining more consistently, particularly in the evenings.

Caribbean

The Caribbean experiences a very different climate than the rest of Costa Rica as it doesn't have the typical dry and rainy season. Instead, it is normal for the Caribbean side to rain almost all year long and it is always humid.

The summer months on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica are September and October. The rainiest months are June and November. January – March are generally drier but keep in mind that it can rain at anytime of the year.

Average temperatures are mid 80s (29 C) with high humidity.



4

Best Places for First Timers

Costa Rica may be small but every city and beach is completely different

Here are our top 10 destinations in Costa Rica, geared towards first time visitors.

1. La Fortuna

- This area is famous for Arenal Volcano National Park, Lake Arenal and the rain forest. La Fortuna is the town that sits at the base of the Arenal Volcano and Arenal refers to the area around the volcano.
- It is a 3.5-4 hour drive from both San Jose and Liberia Airport. No 4x4 required.
- La Fortuna has a wide range of accommodations and activities, making it ideal for any type of traveler.

2. Puerto Viejo

- Known for its laid back, chill Caribbean vibes, Puerto Viejo is a

destination unlike any other in Costa Rica.

- It's about 5 hour drive from San Jose and 8 hours from Liberia. No 4x4 required.
- Has some of the most beautiful beaches in the country with tons of wildlife and nature.

3. Gulf of Papagayo

- Papagayo Gulf not only has some of the country's most beautiful white sand beaches and snorkel spots, but it also has a marina and a handful of 5-star hotels and all-inclusive resorts.
- Perfect for luxury travelers and honeymooners.
- 40 minute drive from Liberia Airport. 5 hour drive from San Jose. 4x4 not required.



4. Tamarindo

- Tamarindo is a popular surfing beach town in Guanacaste. Although very touristic, the beach is beautiful with stunning sunsets. Ideal for surfers, backpackers and families who want convenience.
- Tamarindo is 1 hour from LIR airport and

4-5 hours from San Jose. 4x4 not required.

- Has a fun nightlife, family friendly activities and is close to other nice beaches.



5. Manuel Antonio

- This is one of the most popular destinations in Costa Rica because of Manuel Antonio National Park, famous for its cute sloths and pristine beaches. Quepos is the town near Manuel Antonio.
- About a 2.5 hour drive from San Jose and 4 hour drive from Liberia. No 4×4 required.
- Great for all types of travelers. Has hotels for every budget, especially luxury hotels.

6. Jaco

- Jaco is a popular surfing beach and is the most developed beach town. It's not the prettiest beach but it's ideal for those who like developed areas, convenience and a good night life.
- Jaco is 1.5 hour driving from San Jose and about 3 hours from Liberia. Both routes have nicely paved roads that goes through the main highway. No 4x4 required.

- Jaco is not quite as family-friendly as other beach towns as it has a strong sex tourism industry and is well known for a crazy night life. You'll see many guy groups or bachelor parties going on and there are prostitutes (legal in Costa Rica) at some hotels and bars.

7. San Jose

- As the capital city, this is an excellent location to experience local Costa Rican life. Although it's not the nicest capital city, there are still some interesting places and is one of the best places to visit in Costa Rica to learn about culture and history.
- About a 4 hour drive from Liberia. No 4x4 required.
- San Jose is a great base in Costa Rica since you can take daytrips to see volcanoes, rainforest and beach.

8. Samara

- Samara is a small beach town in southern Guanacaste, known for a laid back vibe, surf waves and being very family friendly.
- 2 hour drive from Liberia, about a 5 hour drive from San Jose. 4x4 not required on the paved roads through Nicoya.
- Not the best base for your vacation since it is quite far from many attractions but great place to enjoy the beach for a few days.

9. Tortuguero

- Although Tortuguero is in a remote area of the North Caribbean that is only accessible by boat or plane, it's actually one of the best places in Costa Rica for first timers. This area, nicknamed the "Little Amazon" of Costa Rica is one of the best for wildlife, nature and rainforest.
- Rainforest sandbar, no road access. Must take boat or plane.
- Best time to visit is July – November for the turtle nestings. Most people stay for 1-3 nights in Tortuguero as it's very small.

10. Monteverde

- Perfect destination for those who enjoy cooler temperatures, forests and wildlife. The Monteverde Cloud Forest is one of the most unique in the world and is where the first zipline in Costa Rica was set up. Santa Elena is the main town in Monteverde.



- About a 4 hour drive from San Jose and Liberia. 4wd/4x4 highly recommended and necessary in rainy season.
- Since it's a smaller, rural mountain town, you only need about 1-3 nights. A must for hikers and bird watchers.

5

Flying to Costa Rica

Costa Rica has two international airports:
San Jose and Liberia

San Jose Airport

- In Alajuela, about a 30 minute drive to downtown San Jose.
- Biggest international airport.
- Airport code is SJO.
- Fly into SJO Airport if you are going to Puerto Viejo, Tortuguero, Jaco, Manuel Antonio, Dominical, Uvita, Osa Peninsula, La Fortuna, Monteverde, Puntarenas, Santa Teresa, Montezuma.
- Close to all the major bus terminals.

Liberia Airport

- Ten minute drive to Liberia downtown.
- Airport code is LIR.
- Is currently expanding to accommodate more flights.
- Very small airport with less than 10 gates.

- Fly into LIR if you are going to Gulf of Papagayo, Tamarindo, Conchal, Flamingo, Samara, Nosara, Playas del Coco and La Cruz. Can also fly into LIR to go to La Fortuna or Monteverde
- Prices to fly into LIR are usually a little bit more expensive than SJO.

Customs and Immigration at the Airports

- Customs is for luggage, immigration is for people
- You will need to fill out a custom form on the plane. One form per family with the same last name living in the same household.
- You will go through immigration first at the airport. The officer will ask you your local address or hotel name and your occupation.
- Then you will pick up your luggage.
- After picking up luggage, go through customs. You will put all your luggage, bags, backpacks and purses through the scanner. Hand the custom officer you form.
- After you finish customs, exit the airport.



6

What to Bring

Tips to help you pack for both seasons and different parts of the country

Packing for Costa Rica isn't too difficult – it all depends on where and when you are going.

Make sure to research the area you are going and what the weather will be like during that time of the year so you can pack accordingly. These are our suggestions for essential items.

Clothing

Costa Rica doesn't have a strict dress code and casual is best for pretty much the entire country. At the beach, your wardrobe will consist mostly of shorts, tank tops and flip flops. In the city, we recommend a little more formal wear. Closed toed shoes, flats for women, jeans and a sweater. If you are visiting areas such as Monteverde, San Gerardo de Dota, San Isidro de Perez Zeledon or the Central Valley mountain areas, you will need long

pants and a jacket.

Our recommendations: We always recommend clothes that dry fast especially if you're visiting the coasts. Additionally, most laundromats don't normally use dryers, they hang dry clothes so you will want clothes that dry fast.

Shoes

Flip flops work fine for most of the country except the city. If you're doing any activities, closed toed sturdy shoes are necessary. Whenever we travel around Costa Rica, I normally bring one pair of flip flops, running/hiking shoes or hiking sandals depending on what we're doing and a pair of comfortable closed toed walking shoes.

Our recommendations: We love closed-toe hiking sandals. They are amazing for all sorts of outdoor activities and you can go from land to water easily. They dry fast, don't smell, your feet can breathe and are much more comfortable than stuffy shoes. We love our KEEN hiking sandals.

Mosquito Repellent

You need to bring mosquito repellent for Costa Rica. The coasts are the worst places for mosquitoes and there are unfortunately, a few serious diseases

you can catch like dengue fever. There are also other little bugs that bite like gnats so repellent is a must. Mosquitoes are not found in elevations above 1500 meters (~5000 feet) but they are everywhere else.

Our recommendations: You can find mosquito repellent in the supermarkets but we recommend bringing your own as it is very expensive and they don't have many natural products.

Sunscreen

Sunscreen is also an essential item to bring and make sure to get at least SPF 30 or higher. Costa Rica is only 8-12 degrees from the equator so it is necessary.

Our recommendations: Bring at least SPF 30 or higher with zinc oxide. If you are going in the ocean, **we encourage you to buy reef safe mineral sunscreen.** We love Raw Elements. If you can, bring sunscreen since there aren't many options without oxybenzone and it's expensive. Don't forget chapstick with SPF and after sun gel.

Toiletries and Medications

You can find all toiletries in Costa Rica like shampoo, conditioner, lotion, toothbrush, mouth wash toothpaste and floss and we recommend bringing

tampons for women (some pulperias, or small grocery stores don't have them), face wash (very expensive and not a lot of choices), a medical kit, detangler spray for hair, hand sanitizer, a packet of tissues and face wipes. If you're taking any medicines, write down a list of them and keep it with you at all times. Try to include the active ingredients in each medicine or find the Spanish name.

For medications, you can find mostly all OTC at the pharmacy. Contact lens solution is mostly sold only at pharmacies. We do recommend bringing allergy medicine like Claritin and Sudafed, as those are very expensive in Costa Rica. You can buy anti-nausea medicine at the pharmacy as well.

Rain Jacket

A waterproof rain jacket is an essential item if you're visiting in rainy season. You may also want to throw your rain jacket if you're visiting in the South Pacific or Osa Peninsula during dry season. It can still rain during those months since that area is much more humid.

Our recommendations: We love our The North Face Venture Jackets and a shell is fine. Look for a jacket with ventilation to let air flow through as it can get humid when hiking in the rain.

Backpack

For day trips, sightseeing and tours, you need a day pack. It'll be a lot more comfortable when you're hiking in the jungle, beach hopping or visiting waterfalls.

Our recommendations: In rainy season, you must bring a waterproof backpack. If you're a photographer, we highly recommend bringing a waterproof backpack even if you're visiting in dry season to keep out sand, dust and humidity.

Micro Fiber Towel

A micro fiber towel is awesome for wiping sweat off, using as a fan to cool off or to wrap your stuff in if it starts raining.

Sunglasses and Hat

Two more essential items for Costa Rica. I do however recommend bringing 2 pairs of sunglasses. One cheap pair so that you won't cry if it gets lost in the ocean. A hat or visor is also essential.

Insulated Water Bottle

Bring an insulated water bottle to help cut down on plastic. Plus having cold water on a hot day at the beach is the best thing! Tap water is safe to

drink for most of the country (except rural areas) but if you have a sensitive stomach, you can bring portable travel water filters.

Cameras and Technology

An action cam is the best to capture all of the adventures. GoPro and Sony Action Cam's are two excellent options and make sure to bring the correct mounts. If you're a photographer, bring a wide angle for landscape shots and a telephoto lens for birds and wildlife. A tripod is a must for wildlife.

Our recommendations: For GoPros, most tour companies will have the part that attaches to the helmet but you need to bring the other part. Bring plenty of SD cards. It is very difficult to find Class 10 SD cards outside the city. Also bring a surge protector as hotels don't have that many sockets.

Accessories and Extras

- Adapter – Costa Rica uses the same voltage as US and Canada.
- Flashlights.
- Battery pack.
- Ziplock bags to protect your electronics.
- Laundry bag.
- Spanish dictionary or guide.
- Costa Rica waterproof map.

A toucan with a large yellow and black beak is perched on a brown branch in a lush green forest. Another toucan is visible in the background on a higher branch.

7

Safety Tips

Practical tips for staying safe while traveling in Costa Rica

Before leaving home

- Leave contact information and travel plans to a family member or someone you trust.
- Print or save on your phone confirmations for airplane tickets, hotel reservations and other bookings.
- Leave expensive jewelry at home.
- If you are taking medications, make sure to bring a list of them and also a copy of your prescription if you are taking narcotics.
- If you are not going to use all your credit cards, leave the ones you don't need. Remember to let your credit card company know you will be in Costa Rica so they don't block your card.
- Take note of your embassy's location and contact information.

During your travel

- Don't wander alone at night or early mornings.
- Have a full color copy of your passport with you at all time and leave the original at a safe place.
- Take a picture on your phone of your immigration stamp.
- Keep your valuables close to you at all times. If you have a backpack, we recommend wearing it in the front if you're in the city.
- Make ATM withdrawals during the day in a well-lit, public area. Avoid help from strangers. Make sure to count the money at the ATM before you leave and safely stow it away.
- Before you go in the ocean, ask about the current wave condition. Rip tides are common at some beaches.
- If you are driving don't pick up strangers on the road.
- If you get flagged down, make sure it is a real cop. They will have a badge and "Transito" on their uniform if they are transit police. There are also tourist police that say "Policia Turistica"
- When you park, don't leave valuables visible. Always roll up your windows and lock your doors.
- Don't leave belongings unattended in public areas. Never leave your purse, backpack, cell phone or wallet on the floor. Always put it in a place that you can see clearly.
- If calling a taxi, verify it is an official taxi by the yellow triangles on the

door, a meter and the code of the province you are in.

- Always have a little bit of cash with you, preferably colones (~10,000).
- Bring a map and if you get lost, ask the police or a public business.
- If you see any suspicious activity or feel uncomfortable, don't take any risks. Go to a safe place immediately.

Emergencies

- The emergency number is 911 and they have English speaking staff.
- If your passport or valuables get stolen, report it immediately to your embassy or consulate. You must also report it to the closest Judicial Investigation Police office (OIJ).

Tourist Scams

- **Broken taxi meter:** Some taxi drivers may claim the meter is broken. If so, get out and find another one. By law, all taxi drivers have to turn on the meter (called Maria).
- **Incorrect currency exchange:** The exchange rate used to be 500 to 1 but now it's around 600 to 1. Make sure to always calculate the correct exchange rate if you are paying in USD. Some vendors will try to use 500 to 1 which will make you lose out.
- **Cheap car rentals:** Some third party websites like Expedia may post super cheap car rental rates which don't include all the insurances,

fees and taxes. So you think you found a cheap rental but when you go to pick up your car, you're slapped with all these last minute fees and insurances you had no idea about. Always double check with the company you are renting from what the final price is.

- **Children with palm leaves:** If you see a child with palm leaves and they offer you a flower or some animal they made from it, don't accept it. They'll act like it's a gift but if you accept it, then they'll start following you and asking for money.
- **Cheap tours:** If someone from the street is offering super cheap tours, don't trust them right away. Most of the times, those vendors are not certified and aren't selling official tours. It is better to book with your hotel or find reputable tour companies online.
- **Bottled water:** When you're at a restaurant, make sure you ask for a "vaso de agua" not "botella de agua." A glass of water is free, bottle water costs money and in tourist areas, usually a lot!



8

Getting Around

How to take the public bus,
taxis and shuttles

Tips for Taking the Bus

1. All bus fare must be paid in colones when you get on
 - For long routes, you buy your ticket beforehand at the bus station. Arrive at the bus station at least 30 minutes early, 1 hour early in busy times such as Christmas and Easter. You can pay in cash or credit card and they will assign you a seat.
 - It is highly recommended to buy tickets beforehand for the long routes such as San Jose to Puerto Viejo, San Jose to Liberia and San Jose to Playas del Coco.
 - For buses that you pay when you get on, you don't need exact change but you do need to tell him how many people when you get on.
 - Most bus drivers do not speak English so it is recommended to learn how to say numbers in Spanish.

2. Check the bus schedule before you go and please note that buses are not always punctual. We recommend to always arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the scheduled time.

Tips for Taking a Taxi

1. Color is important

- Taxis are red with a yellow light and yellow triangle on top.
- Both the driver and passenger door have the plate number.

2. License plates always go by province

- Taxi drivers can only operate in the province they are licensed.

3. Do not take a taxi that is not operating in their province.

- Indicated by the first letters of the plate

TSJ – Taxi San Jose

TH – Taxi Heredia

TL – Taxi Limon and so on

4. Avoid pirate taxis

- They generally charge more and don't have insurance like the legal taxis.

5. Check the meter is on (called MARIA)

- It is the law for every cab driver to use the meter
- If your driver refuses to turn it on, you can take their license plate and report them to the police.

6. Rates change depending on the area and automobile capacity
 - Rural and city rates are different.
7. Orange taxis are for the airport only
 - These taxis are exclusively for the airport.
 - Charge more than red taxis.
8. Pay with small bills and colones
 - Most drivers don't have change for big bills and in some areas, do not take dollars. Always have small colones with you for taxis.
 - We don't recommend paying in USD.
9. Don't slam the door
 - This is for courtesy. Taxi drivers take care of their car very well so please be respectful.

Tips for Taking Shuttles

There are two shuttles you can book in Costa Rica: private and shared. All shuttle companies offer both options.

1. Advantages of Taking Shuttles in Costa Rica
 - Direct and faster than a bus. Whether you take a private or shared shuttle, it's faster than a bus. You don't need to switch buses or wait for people to get on/off.
 - Don't have to worry about driving.

- More comfortable than a bus. Cool down with AC and bigger seats.
- Easy to book. All you have to do is book the shuttle, get picked up and you're good to go!

2. Differences between private and shared shuttles

Shared:

- Shared shuttles are usually up to 10-15 people so it does require some extra time to pick up other passengers.
- They can't pick up directly at the airports, travelers must go to the designated airport pick up place such as Denny's Restaurant for SJO Airport and Hilton Garden Inn by LIR Airport.
- Can only pick up and drop off at hotels/hostels.
- There are usually schedules only in the morning and afternoon.
- Only one break for shared shuttles for long routes.
- Limited luggage space.

Private:

- Private shuttles can pick you up directly from the airport at any time.
- You can stop at any time for food, bathroom or to take pictures on a private shuttle.
- They can pick you up and drop you off at any hotel, hostel or vacation rental.



9

Renting a Car

Tips to help you drive safe
and watch out for various road conditions

Costa Rica drives on the same side of the road as the US and Canada.

Driving License

You are allowed to drive using your driver's license that was issued by your home country.

You can only use it within the time of your visa so if you are here on a tourist visa (90 days), then you can drive for those 90 days. Many car rental companies also require you to have a license for at least 2 years and the minimum age to rent a car is 21 or 23 depending on the company.

Road Signs

Road signs are all in Spanish and they use the same symbols and signs as the US but you need to familiarize yourself with the ones that are different.

- Alto – stop
- Velocidad maxima – maximum speed. Remember they use kilometers here so you'll see KPH
- Ceda el paso – yield
- Puente angosto – narrow bridge
- Desvio – detour
- Despacio – slow
- Cruce de monos – monkey crossing (or could be another animal)
- Una via – one way
- Carretera en mal estado – road in bad condition
- Curvas peligrosas adelante – dangerous curves ahead
- No hay paso – don't enter
- No estacionar – no parking
- No virar en u – no U turns
- Calle sin salida – dead end
- Tarifa liviano – lightweight fare (you will see this at the tollboths)

Road Conditions: City

Road conditions will depend on what part of the country you are in. In San Jose, most of the roads are paved with painted lines and signs. You need to be careful on freeways because roads can end with no warning and you'll have to merge with little space. In the smaller cities and beach towns, the

paved roads aren't as well done as the city and they don't normally have painted lines.

Road Conditions: Rural

If you are heading out of the city to more rural areas, a 4x4 or 4WD is highly recommended. Roads to national parks, some beaches, waterfalls and the little country towns are not normally paved and require a car that will be able to pass through muddy roads and



potholes. Always make sure to check with your hotel

and research if where you are going requires a 4x4. It is also common to see animals out on the road such as bulls, horses, goats, chickens and dogs. Many locals ride scooters and often you'll see as many as 4 people on one!

Accidents

If you get in an accident, do not leave the scene! Wait there until the police and insurance agent arrives, and if there is a fatality you also have to wait for the doctor on duty to pronounce. You are now legally allowed to move your car as long as both parties consent and if it is blocking traffic.

Make sure to call 911 and your car rental company right away.

Tips for Driving

1. Don't let your road rage take over
2. Be patient, especially when turning onto busy roads
3. Don't be alarmed if you are heavily tailgated. This is very common in Costa Rica whether you're going the speed limit or over it.
4. Drive defensively.
5. Don't speed!
 - Many roads are curvy without warning signs
 - When it rains, the roads can be very slippery
 - Driving tickets are very expensive here
6. If driving at night, be very aware of people walking and biking in the road. Many people don't wear reflectors at night
7. Always signal.
8. Don't pass the car in front of you unless you have experience and feel comfortable.
9. If someone flags you down, make sure it is a real police officer first.
10. If you get a ticket, pay it.
 - There is a new law that any unpaid ticket gets handled by immigration and you can be denied exit out of the country.
11. Have a copy of your passport including your visa stamp
 - There are many immigration stops on the road where police officers are allowed to ask for your documents.

Road Conditions

Here are the road conditions for major touristic destinations.

1. Arenal and La Fortuna

The roads around Arenal are in good condition. There are a few unpaved roads, such as the one to the national park and to some of the hotels located out in the hills but they are not that bad, just gravel.

2. Monteverde

Monteverde is one of the destinations in Costa Rica is highly recommended to have a 4×4 or 4WD and is required in rainy season because the roads around Monteverde are unpaved and has big holes. The routes up to Monteverde have a section where it is steep, bumpy with lots of holes and curvy. Route 606 (Sardinal) is currently under construction but open. Route 145 (Las Juntas) is open and is recommended to take that route instead.

3. Puerto Viejo

The roads around Puerto Viejo are in fairly good shape for the most part. The main road that goes into town and along the beaches is paved. There aren't any painted lines but at least the road is paved.

4. Costa Ballena (Dominical, Uvita, Ojochal)

For the Costa Ballena in the South Pacific, it is highly recommended to have a 4×4. Though the main road through this area, the Costanera Sur is a very well paved road, all the roads going up into the mountains and into Ojochal town are unpaved and steep.

5. Manuel Antonio and Jaco

The roads in Manuel Antonio are all paved. Jaco is equally in good shape with paved roads in town.

6. Osa Peninsula

As a very remote destination in Costa Rica, a 4×4 is absolutely necessary. The main road down to the Osa Peninsula from the east side (Puerto Jimenez) is all paved but that's it. All the roads to Drake Bay, Carate and Matapalo are unpaved with lots of holes. It is not recommended to drive to Drake Bay in rainy season as there are a few rivers that flood, making the road completely impassable (remember water damage is not covered under any type of car rental insurance).

7. Tamarindo

The roads around Tamarindo are in good shape. You don't need a 4×4 and can rent a sedan if you're only staying in Tamarindo.

8. Samara

Samara town has paved roads and doesn't require a 4x4. A section is unpaved but it is nothing bad and can be driven to with a sedan.

9. Santa Teresa/Mal Pais/Montezuma

Even if you're taking the ferry and going through Cobano, rent a 4x4 or 4WD. The roads around Santa Teresa are largely unpaved and are dirt roads. The road to Montezuma is paved but if you are driving to Cayuga, the road is unpaved with lots of potholes.

10. Playas del Coco/Hermosa/Ocotal/Panama

The road to the Gulf of Papagayo beaches are all well paved. It is not necessary to have a 4x4.

11. Tenorio Volcano National Park (Rio Celeste)

There are 2 ways to Tenorio Volcano National Park: from La Fortuna or Liberia in Guanacaste. Both ways now have freshly new paved roads to the national park.



10

Handling Money

Costa Rican currency and how to handle money

The Costa Rica currency is the colon (colones plural), named after Christopher Columbus. The Costa Rican currency symbol is a c with two lines across.

The current exchange rate (2019) is 610 colones to 1 USD but the exchange rates change daily. If you have trouble remembering this, just double the colones and take out 3 zeroes. (20,000 colones is \$40) to get an estimate.

Something very important to note about the exchange rate is that some places will use a 500 to 1 ratio. However, if you use 500 to 1, you will be losing out. Use it only to get an idea of how much something costs.

Coins:

5, 10, 25, 50, 100, and 500 coins

Bills:

1,000 colones



10,000 colones



2,000 colones



20,000 colones



5,000 colones



50,000 colones



Using USD in Costa Rica

USD are readily accepted in Costa Rica. You will notice that hotels, tours and many restaurants are quoted in USD and this is because most of their tourists are from the United States.

When Should You Use Dollars or Colones?

- Pay in USD when things are quoted in USD. These are things like tours, private/shared shuttles, hotels, etc. Usually the more expensive products.
- Use colones for smaller priced items quoted in colones. These are small supermarkets (pulperias), souvenir stores, farmers markets, street vendors, taxis, buses and toll booths. You should also use colones if you happen to be in a rural area.
- The buses that you pay when you get on (mostly the local ones in San Jose) do not accept any currency except colones.
- You can use dollars at gas station and large supermarkets even though they are priced in colones as they typically use a correct exchange rate and not the rounded 500 to 1. You can pay in dollars and they will give you your change back in colones.
- You can tip in either colones or dollars but dollars is preferable in the tourism industry.

Where to Exchange Money in Costa Rica

The best places to exchange money are banks and authorized exchange windows. You can also exchange at some hotels such as the big chains like Marriotts and Westins but most hotels are not allowed to. There is also a currency exchange in both SJO and LIR airports.

Other Currencies

We recommend exchanging your money into dollars if you can before going to Costa Rica because euros, pounds, Canadian dollars or any other foreign currency besides USD are not accepted. Very few banks will exchange other currencies so it is best to get USD or Costa Rican colones.

However, if you don't want to exchange into USD, you can exchange your money into colones at the airport exchange as they take other foreign currency. Even if prices are listed in USD, colones is accepted everywhere for everything, just make sure to calculate the correct exchange rate.

Tipping

Tip is not called tip in Costa Rica, it is called service tax with a flat rate of 10%. Tipping is completely optional in Costa Rica.

- At a restaurant: Tip is usually included in the prices on the menu (it will say if it is or not). Look on the bottom of the menu to find out. It will say impuestos incluidos or i.v.i if included.
- Tours: Most of the time tip is included in the tour price that you pay. Some tour places will have tip boxes but it is completely optional. The normal amount to tip is 10%.
- Drivers: 10% is a good standard for tipping drivers as well.
- Hotels: You can leave around \$2 or 1500-2000 colones a day for maids.

11

Resources & Discounts

Save \$\$ with our Mytanfeet exclusive deals

Car Rental

We have an exclusive discount for Mytanfeet readers. Get up to 20% off a car rental, two free drivers, free surf racks, free baby & booster seat, 33% off GPS and many more extra benefits.

Local Flights

Get 10% off and an extra 10 pounds of luggage with our discount code, SWMTF18 when you book a flight with Skyway Costa Rica.

We have many discounts for tours as well. You can find all our deals and discounts on this page: <https://mytanfeet.com/costa-rica-exclusive-benefits-and-discounts/>



A Note from the Authors

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Thank you for reading our ebook and subscribing to our blog!

We hope this guide was helpful to you and don't forget to stop by our blog Mytanfeet for more stories, tips and photos! To get updates on our current adventures, tips and advice, make sure to like our Facebook page as we post all of the good stuff there!

Thank you so much!

Yeison and Samantha

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