

dive
DISCOVERY
Complete Dive and Adventure Travel

Holiday in Costa Rica





NARANJO



MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST RESERVE

Holiday in Costa Rica

Alajuela - Corcovado National Park - Naranjo - Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

9 Days / 8 Nights

2 Persons

Reference: #33816

Date of Issue: 17 October 2019

23 December 2019 - 31 December 2019



Introduction

Accommodation	Destination	Basis	Room Type	Duration
Xandari Costa Rica	Alajuela	B&B	1x Prima Standard Room	1 Night
Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge	Corcovado National Park	FB+	1x Honeymoon Suite	3 Nights
Chayote Lodge	Naranjo	B&B	1x Recibidor Suite	2 Nights
Senda Monteverde	Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve	B&B	1x Junior Suite	2 Nights

Key

B&B: Bed and Breakfast

FB+: Full Board Plus - Dinner, Bed, Breakfast, Lunch and Activities

Included

Arrival at the San José International airport. As you exit the airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel. (**Private** transfer service).

1 night accommodation at Xandari Resort and Spa (Prima Standard Room). (Breakfast included)

Private transfer from your hotel to the Local Terminal at the San Jose Airport.

Domestic flight from San Jose to Palmar Sur, approximately 50 minutes. Luggage restrictions apply.

Land and boat transfer from the Palmar Sur airstrip to your hotel in Drake Bay, Osa Peninsula.

Casa Corcovado Lodge 4 day/3 night package including 3 nights' accommodations, land, air and boat transfers, guided tours and entrance fees of Corcovado National Park and Caño Island and meals.

3 nights' accommodations at Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge. (Honeymoon Suite) (Daily meals included).

Corcovado National Park half day tour including transportation, local guide and entrance fee.

Caño Island Boat Tour including transportation, snorkeling equipment, local guides and entrance fees.

Land and boat transfer from your hotel in Drake Bay, Osa Peninsula to the Palmar Sur airstrip.

Domestic flight from Palmar Sur to San Jose, approx. 50 minutes. Luggage restrictions apply.

Private transfer from the Local Terminal in San José to your Hotel Llano Bonito de Alajuela, approx. 1 hour transfer.

2 nights' accommodations at Chayote Lodge. (Recibidor Suite). (Breakfast included).

Naranjo Coffee and Town Tour including transfers, local guide and lunch. (Lunch included).

Private transfer from Chayote Lodge to your hotel in Monteverde, approx. 3 hour transfer.

2 nights' accommodations at Hotel Senda Monteverde. (Junior Suite). (Breakfast included).

Selvatura Canopy Zip line and Sky Walk Tour including transportation, local guides, equipment and entrance fees.

Private transfer back to the San José International Airport, approximately 3.5 hour transfer. Check in at airport is 3 hours.

Excluded

Not Included: Airfare to Costa Rica; travel insurance; gratuities; any lodging, tours or meals not specified in the itinerary; extras in hotels (laundry, phone calls, room service, etc.); personal equipment; costs associated with changes to your itinerary for reasons beyond our control.

Please note:

- All persons entering Costa Rica must have a passport valid for 6 months past the date of entry.
- Baggage limit per person for flights within Costa Rica: 40 lbs (18 kg); charter flights: 25 lbs (12 kg).
- Any changes or cancellations made to these services while in Costa Rica are at the traveler's expense.
- No refunds will be given for unused services as per our terms and conditions.
- terms and conditions apply.
- Travelers are encouraged to take out travel insurance.

Day 1: Xandari Costa Rica, Alajuela (Mon, 23 December)

Alajuela

Situated in vibrant Costa Rica, the large city of Alajuela serves as the capital of the Alajuela Province. It is known for its rich history, laid-back charm and provides an excellent base from which to explore the countryside to the north. This city's biggest claim to fame is that it is the hometown of one of the country's most famous national heroes, Juan Santamaria, a humble drummer boy who sacrificed his life at the Battle of Santa Rosa. Visitors can look forward to exploring Parque Central, a lush oasis in the heart of the city; browsing the massive Central Market, which stretches over an entire block; or visiting the Juan Santamaria Cultural Historical Museum, to learn about local history and view an array of historical artefacts. Don't miss the opportunity to sample authentic Costa Rican cuisine at one of the many restaurants and cafes lining the bustling streets.

Day Itinerary

Upon your arrival in San José, Costa Rica and after passing through immigration you will be met by a member of the National Chamber of Tourism (CANATUR) who will give you a sticker that will facilitate our representative to identify you after exit the Airport building.

As you exit the airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Your driver will provide you with the travel vouchers for your services and review them with you at this time.

Overnight: Xandari Costa Rica

Xandari Costa Rica is nestled on a 40-acre plantation, surrounded by lush gardens, and with terraces offering spectacular views of Costa Rica's majestic Central Valley. Accommodation includes 24 villas categorised as prima villas, prima plus villas, ultra villas, ultra plus villas and star villas.

The on-site restaurant features a variety of healthy choices, from Costa Rican specialities to Californian and Mediterranean cuisines. The resort is a natural oasis with trails, exotic gardens, waterfalls, three lap pools, two poolside Jacuzzis, and five private spa Jacuzzis with panoramic views.



Basis

Bed and Breakfast

Included

Arrival at the San José International airport. As you exit the airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel. (**Private** transfer service).

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 2: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge, Corcovado National Park (Tue, 24 December)

Corcovado National Park

One of Costa Rica's most important ecological areas, Corcovado National Park was once described by National Geographic as 'the most biologically intense place on earth'. This rich ecosystem stretches along the southern Pacific coast and encompasses beautiful ocean bays, tropical rainforest teeming with life, Central America's largest wetland area, and the country's biggest mangrove forest, sprawled over 20 000 hectares. Its myriad exotic creatures include jaguars, ocelots, tapirs, red macaws, quetzals and red-eyed tree frogs – not to mention the dolphins and humpback whales that breed in the coastal waters. Nature and adventure lovers will be in their element here, with a host of outdoor activities on offer, including wildlife viewing, fishing, surfing, and jungle treks.

Day Itinerary

You will be picked up at your hotel by one of our transport representatives for transfer to the Local Terminal at the San Jose Airport.

Local airline flight from San Jose to Palmar Sur. Check in 1 hour prior to flight departure time, approximately 50 minutes.

You will be picked up at the airstrip in Palmar Sur by a representative from your hotel for land transfer to the Sierpe River, approximately 30 minutes. Once at the River board a motor boat to Drake Bay, approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. The boat ride through the Sierpe River will take you through mangrove forests to admire the flora and fauna of this unique ecosystem. Drake Bay offers visitors a taste of a tropical wilderness along the coast and into the forests of nearby Corcovado National Park.

Bring: water shoes, sunscreen and protective sun gear, camera, insect repellent, a light rain jacket, bathing suit, hat, sunglasses, waterproof camera bag, prescription medicine.

Please be prepared for a wet landing upon arrival at the Lodge.

Consultant Notes

Regarding luggage restrictions on domestic flights: Check in 45 minutes prior to flight departure time. Maximum LUGGAGE PERMITTED 40 POUNDS PER PERSON for checked in baggage and one piece of carry-on luggage that does not exceed 10 pounds. We recommend packing a change of clothes, any essentials (including toiletries and medications) in a carry-on bag in the event your luggage is delayed. Excess baggage is subject to space availability on the plane. Additional charges apply. Itineraries are subject to change without prior notice to the passengers and with no responsibility for the carrier.

Overnight: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge

Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge is located in a tropical garden surrounded by pristine rainforest on the edge of the Corcovado National Park. Accommodation is available in a selection of suites and bungalows which feature modern amenities including electricity, ceiling fans, hot water, and a safety deposit box. Guests may enjoy delicious meals at the

in-house restaurant which specialises in traditional Costa Rican cuisine. The outdoor bar serves a variety of non-alcoholic beverages and features a stunning view of the rainforest. The lodge also features a secluded spring-fed swimming pool which is surrounded by jungle.



Basis

Full Board Plus - Dinner, Bed, Breakfast, Lunch and Activities

Included

Breakfast.

Private transfer from your hotel to the Local Terminal at the San Jose Airport.

Domestic flight from San Jose to Palmar Sur, approximately 50 minutes. Luggage restrictions apply.

Land and boat transfer from the Palmar Sur airstrip to your hotel in Drake Bay, Osa Peninsula.

Snacks.

Dinner.

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 3: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge, Corcovado National Park (Wed, 25 December)

Day Itinerary

Corcovado National Park has often been described as one of the most biologically intense places on earth. The park extends over 100,000 acres on the southwest coast of Costa Rica.

Your guided walk will bring you into a wonderland of ancient, steamy forests dominated by huge trees, home to much wildlife including scarlet macaws, toucans, parrots, all four monkey species found in the country and jaguars-although these elusive cats are rarely seen.

Bring: water, light clothing, hiking shoes, repellent, camera, binoculars, sunscreen, umbrella. Includes: entrance fee and local guide.

Consultant Notes

Due to established limits in the number of visitors to Corcovado and Caño Island National Parks the Lodge reserves the right to change the order of the tours.

Activities

Morning	Corcovado National Park
---------	-------------------------

Corcovado National Park

One of Costa Rica's most important ecological areas, Corcovado National Park was once described by National Geographic as 'the most biologically intense place on earth'. This rich ecosystem stretches along the southern Pacific coast and encompasses beautiful ocean bays, tropical rainforest teeming with life, Central America's largest wetland area, and the country's biggest mangrove forest, sprawled over 20 000 hectares. Its myriad exotic creatures include jaguars, ocelots, tapirs, red macaws, quetzals and red-eyed tree frogs – not to mention the dolphins and humpback whales that breed in the coastal waters. Nature and adventure lovers will be in their element here, with a host of outdoor activities on offer, including wildlife viewing, fishing, surfing, and jungle treks.

Basis

Full Board Plus - Dinner, Bed, Breakfast, Lunch and Activities

Included

Breakfast, lunch & dinner.

Corcovado National Park half day tour including transportation, local guide and entrance fee.

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 4: Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge, Corcovado National Park (Thu, 26 December)

Day Itinerary

Caño Island was once an important ceremonial site and burial ground for the pre-Colombian Indians. Its possible they abandoned the area when pirates began arriving - the first, according to legend, being Sir Francis Drake back in 1579. The island is now a National Park.

Your tour starts after a leisurely breakfast, when you will meet your guide at the Gear House to select your flippers and mask. Its then a 40-minute boat ride to Caño Island. At certain times of the year, you may also see pilotor humpback whales, and dolphin along the way. The snorkeling site is located within a marine reserve, and is a good place for spotting a wide variety of fish and marine mammals, including - if you are lucky - manta rays, turtles and small white-tipped sharks.

There are no facilities, and visitor access to the interior is prohibited while important infrastructure work is carried out. However our boat can take you close to the shore and you are welcome to wade ashore and stroll along the beach.

Bring: Water shoes, sunblock lotion, light clothing, light jacket, hat or bandana and swimsuit.

Consultant Notes

Due to established limits in the number of visitors to Corcovado and Caño Island National Parks the Lodge reserves the right to change the order of the tours.

Activities

Morning	Isla del Caño
---------	---------------

Isla del Caño

Isla del Caño is a small Island located in Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica. The Island is situated on the Pacific Ocean side of Costa Rica and is approximately 123 m high. The Caño Island National Park has been established on the Island and serves as a popular destination for whale watching and other marine-based activities.

Basis

Full Board Plus - Dinner, Bed, Breakfast, Lunch and Activities

Included

Breakfast, lunch & dinner.

Caño Island Boat Tour including transportation, snorkeling equipment, local guides and entrance fees.

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 5: Chayote Lodge, Naranjo (Fri, 27 December)

Naranjo

Naranjo is a tiny agricultural town resting at the base of the Espírito Santo Hills in Costa Rica's lush Central Valley. With more than two hundred years of coffee cultivation under its belt, the town has become a coffee lovers' mecca with ever increasing numbers of visitors touring the area's coffee plantations, sampling some in the finest coffees of the world, and learning about the local brew. Other popular activities in the area include discovering the lush tropical landscape via a canopy tour or a jungle hike. Don't miss the chance to explore the nearby Juan Castro Blanco National Park which is known for its orchid flowers and quetzal birds, as well as the Poás Volcano National Park which features a remarkable crater lake filled with smoke billowing from fumaroles.

Day Itinerary

You will be picked up by a representative from your hotel. Board a motor boat from Drake Bay to the main port of the Sierpe River, approximately 1 hour and 30 minute transfer. The boat ride through the Sierpe River will take you through mangrove forests to admire the flora and fauna. At the port of the Sierpe River you will take a land transfer to the Palmar Sur airstrip, approximately 30 minutes.

Please be prepared for a wet take off when departing the Lodge.

Local airline flight from Palmar Sur to San Jose. Check in 1 hour prior to flight departure time, approximately 50 minutes.

Pick up at the Local Terminal in San José for a private 1 hour overland transfer, plus any stops along the way, to your hotel in Llano Bonito de Alajuela.

Chayote Lodge is a new lodging concept where the unique combination of culture and nature meet to share with its guests' one of the most valuable treasures of Costa Rica: our authentic lifestyle and culture.

Consultant Notes

Regarding luggage restrictions on domestic flights: Check in 45 minutes prior to flight departure time. Maximum LUGGAGE PERMITTED 40 POUNDS PER PERSON for checked in baggage and one piece of carry-on luggage that does not exceed 10 pounds. We recommend packing a change of clothes, any essentials (including toiletries and medications) in a carry-on bag in the event your luggage is delayed. Excess baggage is subject to space availability on the plane. Additional charges apply. Itineraries are subject to change without prior notice to the passengers and with no responsibility for the carrier.

Overnight: Chayote Lodge

Chayote Lodge is located high in the mountains near Llano Bonito on the outskirts of the Central Valley. Accommodation is available in recibidor suites which resemble the old coffee receiving stations of the past. All suites feature modern amenities which include Wi-Fi, safety box, telephone, and a private suspended balcony. The in-house restaurant is situated at the highest point of the property and features breathtaking views of the Gulf of Nicoya in the Pacific ocean. The restaurant menu is seasonal and focuses on authentic Costa Rican cuisine.



Basis

Bed and Breakfast

Included

Breakfast.

Land and boat transfer from your hotel in Drake Bay, Osa Peninsula to the Palmar Sur airstrip.

Domestic flight from Palmar Sur to San Jose, approx. 50 minutes. Luggage restrictions apply.

Private transfer from the Local Terminal in San José to your Hotel Llano Bonito de Alajuela, approx. 1 hour transfer.

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 6: Chayote Lodge, Naranjo (Sat, 28 December)

Day Itinerary

Naranjo is small town sheltering some of Costa Rica best coffee plantations. Over two hundred years of coffee cultivation, have marked Naranjo as a mecca in the production of some of the finest coffees of the world, achieving several world awards for its quality.

Our first stop will be at the Espiritu Santo Coffee Tour; during hour and a half we will learn all the secrets of why this famous drink has taken the world over. We will be able to learn about all phases of the coffee, from the seed to the cup.

The visit takes place in farm own by the local cooperative of coffee growers, where a coffee landscaping of rolling hills make a unique scenery. After our coffee tour, we will continue to the Municipal Market, where vegetables, fruits, meats and other produce is for sale for the local inhabitants to buy always fresh produce. Our guide will tell us about the different fruits and explain how they are used in local homes. We will have lunch in one the eateries of the market. After

lunch we will visit the local church, the Basilica of the Lady of Piedades, rebuilt after several earthquakes in the 1940s.

Bring: bug repellent, sun block lotion, light clothing, hiking shoes, raincoat, camera and hat.

Consultant Notes

A terrace café just outside the main dining room is the perfect setting for an ‘alfresco’ breakfast, lunch or afternoon coffee.

Our coffee culture is the principal motivation for the design and decoration. The hand painted lamps in the welcome corridor represent the five stages of the coffee bean. Coffee sticks decorate part of the ceiling, and the “*cajuelas*” or metal measuring tools used daily in the coffee fields to ration the coffee picked by farmers are used in the bar to decorate and exhibit our liquor bottles.

You will only savor natural fresh food prepared with locally grown produce and some even in our own gardens. Our menu changes according to seasonal vegetables and fruits. We are proud to rescue the best of our Costa Rican cuisine and present it as part of your experience in the lodge.

Quelites Restaurant is very popular among locals. Feel free to make new friends and learn firsthand why Costa Rican’s claim to be the happiest people in the world.

Activities

Morning	Naranjo Coffee Tour and Town
---------	------------------------------

Basis

Bed and Breakfast

Included

Breakfast.

Naranjo Coffee and Town Tour including transfers, local guide and lunch. (Lunch included).

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 7: Senda Monteverde, Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve (Sun, 29 December)

Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

Known as the 'Forest in the Clouds', Monteverde is one of Costa Rica's key conservation areas, taking in six different ecological zones and home to a kaleidoscopic array of flora and fauna. Breathtaking walking trails traverse this mountainous reserve, while a network of canopy bridges are suspended in the tree tops overhead – both offering visitors the chance to experience its astonishing biodiversity. The park's menagerie of exotic wildlife includes jaguars, ocelots, three-wattled bell birds, bare-necked umbrella birds, and elusive, vividly coloured quetzals, while its botanical offerings range from woodlands and rainforests, to exquisite orchids, delicate ferns, jungle vines and mosses.

Day Itinerary

Today you will be transferred to your next destination: Monteverde.

Monteverde is more rural village than town, although it does offer some conveniences. Your best bet for services such as gas is to stop in nearby Santa Elena, which offers a bank, pharmacy, restaurants and Internet cafes.

The Monteverde area has several dairy farms, which produce some delicious cheeses.

The dairy farms were established by Quakers who migrated from the U.S. to Costa Rica to avoid the WW II draft. The Quakers were instrumental in developing Monteverde and preserving the cloud forest.

Overnight: Senda Monteverde

Senda Monteverde is located in the beautiful town of Monteverde in Costa Rica. The hotel offers 28 guest rooms and suites with open-air porches overlooking the lush gardens. Guests can explore the mystical Cloud Forest, learn about the local Quaker culture as well as walk through the area's famous Farmer's Market. The hotel also offers luxury amenities, gorgeous local artworks and playful nooks to relax in.



Further Information: <https://www.sendamonteverde.com/>

Basis

Bed and Breakfast

Included

Breakfast.

Private transfer from Chayote Lodge to your hotel in Monteverde, approx. 3 hour transfer.

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 8: Senda Monteverde, Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve (Mon, 30 December)

Day Itinerary

The Selvatura Canopy and Walkways Tour in Monteverde are a zip line adventure ride and treetop canopy bridge walk respectively. The zip line canopy tour is an exhilarating ride through the tree tops where you are suspended by a harness and glide on 15 cables. Between cables you rest on platforms constructed among the trees which offer panoramic views.

On the Walkways Tour you hike along a 1.7 mile cloud forest trail and suspension bridges through and above the tree tops.

Bring: hiking shoes, jacket, insect repellent and sunscreen.

Activities

Morning	Selvatura Park
---------	----------------

Selvatura Park

Selvatura Park is a conservation area located in Monteverde with around 850 acres of protected land. Selvatura Park is an eco Adventure Theme Park dedicated to give visitors a chance to experience the cloud forest and enjoy its fun and adventurous activities.

Basis

Bed and Breakfast

Included

Breakfast.

Selvatura Canopy Zip line and Sky Walk Tour including transportation, local guides, equipment and entrance fees.

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Day 9: End of Itinerary (Tue, 31 December)

COST: 3960.00 PER PERSON TWIN SHARING

Day Itinerary

Pick up at your hotel in Monteverde for a departure transfer to the San Jose International Airport for your international flight.

Consultant Notes

Check in 3 hours prior to your scheduled flight time.

Basis

Bed and Breakfast

Included

Private transfer back to the San José International Airport, approximately 3.5 hour transfer.

Excluded

Gratitudes.

Services or meals not specified in program.

Transport

Flight Information

Date	Flight	Airline	Departure Airport	Time	Arrival Airport	Time	Class	Ref
24 Dec	Scheduled		Juan Santamaria International Airport [SJO]		Palmar Sur Airport [PMZ]			
27 Dec	Scheduled		Palmar Sur Airport [PMZ]		Juan Santamaria International Airport [SJO]			

Transfers

Date	Company	Pick Up	Drop Off	Time	Vehicle
23 Dec		Juan Santamaria International Airport [SJO]	Xandari Costa Rica		Transfer
24 Dec		Xandari Costa Rica	Juan Santamaria International Airport [SJO]		Transfer
27 Dec		Juan Santamaria International Airport [SJO]	Chayote Lodge		Transfer
29 Dec		Chayote Lodge	Senda Monteverde		Transfer
31 Dec		Senda Monteverde	Juan Santamaria International Airport [SJO]		Transfer

Voyage Information

Date	Boat	Agency	Departure Port	Time	Arrival Port	Time	Class	Ref
24 Dec	Cruise		Palmar Sur Airport [PMZ]		Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge			
27 Dec	Cruise		Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge		Palmar Sur Airport [PMZ]			

Travel Information



Visitors to the Republic of Costa Rica will find that despite its small size, the country has an incredible number of attractions and activities to offer. Five per cent of the world's biodiversity can be found within Costa Rica's borders and great efforts have been made to preserve this rich resource; protected national parks make up almost 25% of the land – more than any other country in the world. From fishing and surfing to white water rafting and exploring volcanic regions, Costa Rica is the perfect playground for nature lovers and adventures seekers alike.

Banking and Currency

Currency

Costa Rican Colón (CRC; symbol ₡) = 100 céntimos. Notes are in denominations of ₡50,000, 20,000, 10,000, 5,000, 2,000 and 1,000. Coins are in denominations of ₡500, 100, 50, 25, 20, 10 and 5. USdollars are also widely accepted.

The import and export of local and foreign currency is limited to US\$10,000. Amounts above this must be declared upon arrival.

Currency exchange facilities are available at banks and bureaux de change. Some hotels may also change money. Additionally, small stores will allow visitors to pay for goods in US dollars (small notes US\$20.00, US\$10.00) and receive change in colónes. We highly advice not to exchange currency at the airports bureaux de change, they always give you a very low exchange rate, try to use always banks or hotel cashiers.

Banking

Banking hours: State banks Mon-Fri 09h00-15h00. Private banks Mon-Fri 08h00-16h00.

Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa credit cards are all accepted; American Express slightly less so. Many banks will only process MasterCard for cash credits. Cash may be the only form of payment in smaller towns and rural areas but many places will take US dollars, giving change in colónes.

ATMs are common throughout the cities and small towns. They will usually accept foreign cards but in some regions only Visa cards are accepted. Occasionally, paying with credit cards may not be possible for technical reasons. Bringing a good supply of US dollars in cash is advised, as many things such as entrance fees to national parks or meals at restaurants, can be paid for with US dollars.

Although travellers can avoid additional exchange rate charges by taking traveller's cheques in US dollars, fewer and fewer businesses in Costa Rica are willing to accept them, and it is better to use the ATM.

Travel, Transport and Getting Around

SANSA (www.flysansa.com) operates services between San José and provincial towns and tourist resorts, including Tortuguero, Tamarindo, Quepos and Golfito. A number of companies also provide internal charter flights using different plane sizes. Much of Costa Rica is riddled with challenging roads, so if you can afford to fly then it will make your life a lot more comfortable.

Costa Ricans drive on the right side of the road. The quality of the roads in Costa Rica is, for the most part, not great. Stretches of the Pan-American Highway leading to and from the major cities tend to be okay, but the rest is a mix of dust, gravel, potholes and perilously mountainous roads. Be very careful driving – especially if you're in a hired car and want to get your deposit back – and if you're a nervous driver then consider public transport instead. You must be over 21 to hire a car, and though an international driver's license is safest, you are likely to be able to use a full license from your own country. You will need a credit card for the deposit, which will cost at least as much as the car hire but which you will hopefully get back.

There are many different car hire companies in Costa Rica, predominantly in San José and at the main airport, but it is advisable to either book a car through a local travel agency or to be exceptionally careful to note and confirm any damage or scratches to the vehicle before you drive off. Also ensure that the vehicle comes with a spare tyre – a decent one! – and a jack, because Costa Rica's roads are such that you may well need one.

A speed limit of 80kph (55mph) is enforced on most highways. However, Costa Ricans are notoriously dangerous drivers who pay little heed to speed limits and traffic regulations. Be careful going through towns, as the speed limit drops. If you speed or drink drive the Costa Rican police can fine you heavily, so it is suggested that you don't do anything to antagonise them and, if you are pulled over, be extremely nice. Never try and bribe them. Use of seat belts is mandatory.

Taxis are numerous and inexpensive in San José. The taxis are coloured red (except those serving the Juan Santamaría International Airport, which are orange). Taxis are usually metered, but few drivers use the meters as they figure they can extract more money from tourists by not doing so. Make sure they put it on and that it hasn't already been running, or ask your hotel concierge how much a fare should be, and negotiate with the driver to an agreed amount before setting off.

Public transport via road in Costa Rica ranges from the large coach companies such as the Tica Bus (www.ticabus.com) and Transnica (506 2223 4242; <http://transnica.com>), which are comfortable and air-conditioned, to tiny little shuttle buses in the Nicoya Peninsula, where they pack you in and jolt you around for hours. Bus travel, however long and potentially frustrating, is inexpensive and often quite fun.

Train lines are now limited to two commuter routes: from Heredia to San José, travelling only at peak times and taking half an hour; and from Pavas via San José and San Pedro to Curridabat, running only hourly in the morning and evening.

Food, Drink and Cuisine Advice

Costa Rica is not a major foodie destination, but what it lacks in sophistication it makes up for in choice.

The Caribbean coast tends to be more influenced by the island nations. Jamaican-style jerk chicken is a staple; rice and beans (gallo pinto) are ubiquitous, but more likely to be prepared with coconut milk; and curry spices feature heavily as ingredients, creating dishes with a very distinct flavour from their counterparts on the Pacific coast.

The Costa Rican diet is fairly healthy with low use of dairy or high-fat dishes. Fresh fruits and vegetables make up a high proportion of meals, while pork, chicken and beef are the most popular meats. Seafood is available throughout the country, particularly in coastal regions, with sea bass being the most common fish on menus.

Mains water is normally heavily chlorinated and, whilst relatively safe to drink, may cause mild abdominal upsets. Drinking water outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and sterilisation is advisable. Bottled water is available and is advised for the duration of the stay, especially for those who are liable to sensitive stomachs. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

Climate and Weather

In the Central Valley, where the main centres of population are located, the average temperature is 22°C (72°F) and the region enjoys a spring-like climate year round. In the coastal areas, the temperature is much hotter and humid, while the Pacific Northwest can be extremely hot and dry. The rainy season starts in May and finishes in November, although there are distinct regional variations. June and July are the wettest months, particularly on the Caribbean side, but the season can run from May until December. The 'warm' dry season is December to May, though temperature differences between summer and winter are slight. March is the height of the dry season, and the humidity is lower at this time, making this a popular time for visitors.

Clothing and Dress Recommendations

Lightweight cotton and linen clothing is recommended for most of the year with warmer clothes for cooler evenings. Waterproofing is necessary during the rainy season. Loose-fitting clothing is best. Wear neutral browns and greens for birding and wildlife viewing. Always bring mosquito repellent for both day and night.

Electricity and Plug Standards

Electric sockets in the Republic of Costa Rica are Type B (NEMA 5-15) and/or Type A (NEMA 1-15). If your appliance's plug doesn't match the shape of these sockets, you will need a travel plug adapter in order to plug in. Travel plug adapters simply change the shape of your appliance's plug to match whatever type of socket you need to plug into. If it's crucial to be able to plug in no matter what, bring an adapter for all three types.

Electrical sockets supply electricity at 120 volts AC / 60 Hz frequency. If you're plugging in an appliance that was built for 220-240 volt electrical input, or an appliance that is compatible with multiple voltages, then an adapter is all you need. If your appliance isn't compatible with 120 volts, a voltage converter will be necessary.

Terms and Conditions

Itinerary Terms and Conditions

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTATION: All persons entering Costa Rica must carry a valid passport which is valid for 6 months past the date of entry into Costa Rica. It is the responsibility of the passenger to obtain all necessary passports, visas and tourist cards required for travel. Cancellation fees apply for cancellations due to incorrect documentation.

INSURANCE: Trip cancellation and/or interruption, baggage, and medical/accident insurance is highly recommended. Costa Rica Connection and Costa Rica Sun Tours will not be held responsible for any damage to luggage before, during or after the program. The trip i

PAYMENTS AND FEES: A NON REFUNDABLE deposit of 25% per person is due to confirm the booking.

FINAL PAYMENT: Final payment is due in our office 60 days prior to departure. If not received the reservation may be cancelled and the deposit forfeited. Peak season bookings may be subject to early final payment dates to secure land arrangements.

CHANGES: A change fee of \$100.00 per person will be charged for each change made after reservations have been confirmed and initial deposit has been paid. No change will be allowed 30 days or less prior to departure. Date changes will only be accepted 45 days prior to departure or cancellation fees will apply.

NON-REFUNDABLE CHARGES: Certain suppliers who furnish transportation and/or other services require non-refundable deposits to reserve bookings. This is especially true during the high season. Should a non-refundable deposit be required to reserve the booking, the client agrees to pay the fee promptly as requested or the booking shall be released. Costa Rica Connection and Costa Rica Sun Tours shall not be liable for any failure on the client's part to pay a deposit in a timely manner, nor shall Costa Rica Connection or Costa Rica Sun Tours have any obligation to the client to return a non-refundable deposit in the event of cancellation of the client's trip.

RESPONSIBILITY: Costa Rica Connection and Costa Rica Sun Tours act solely as agents for the suppliers who have provided transportation, hotels, vehicles, equipment or other services arranged for clients. The suppliers are independent contractors. Costa Rica Connection and Costa Rica Sun Tours are not responsible for the willful or negligent acts and/or omissions of such suppliers or any carrier or their respective employees, agents, servants or representatives. All vouchers, receipts and tickets are issued subject to the terms and conditions specified by the suppliers and/or carriers. By utilizing the travel services of the suppliers, the client agrees that neither Costa Rica Connection nor Costa Rica Sun Tours nor any representative or employee of Costa Rica Connection or Costa Rica Sun Tours shall be liable for any loss to the client or those traveling with him/her. Nor shall Costa Rica Connection or Costa Rica Sun Tours be liable for any event beyond their control. Costa Rica Connection and Costa Rica Sun Tours cannot be responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air schedules or other causes.