JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

# COSTA RICA WILDLIFE DISCOVERY

13 days from **£4,565pp**

**COSTA RICA / SAN JOSE AND CENTRAL VALLEY / TORTUGUERO AND THE CARIBBEAN COAST / ARENAL AND THE NORTH / OSA PENINSULA**



# WITH OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE, NO-ONE KNOWS LATIN AMERICA LIKE WE DO

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

## WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

## OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

### WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

- A passion for the region runs through all we do
- All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America
- Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

### TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

- Fully bonded and licensed
- ATOL-protected
- On your side when it matters
- Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

### THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

- Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks
- We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions
- Let us show you the Latin America we know and love

# OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

Costa Rica is well known for the proliferation of its wildlife. Spot exotic quetzals, tiny tree-frogs and three species of monkey in locations chosen for their wildlife viewing potential.

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| **DAY 1** | **Arrive in San José and transfer to your hotel.** |
| **DAY 2** | **Fly to Tortuguero National Park.** |
| **DAY 3** | **Wildlife spotting excursion in Tortuguero.** |
| **DAY 4** | **Fly to Arenal.** |
| **DAY 5** | **Excursion to Arenal Volcano & Guided excursion to the Ecotermales hot springs.** |
| **DAY 6** | **Wildlife spotting in Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge** |
| **DAY 7** | **Transfer to Bajos del Toro.** |
| **DAY 8** | **Birdwatching in Bosque del Paz.** |
| **DAY 9** | **Transfer to San Jose airport and fly to the Osa Peninsula.** |
| **DAY 10** | **Snorkelling expedition; whale and dolphin watching in season.** |
| **DAY 11** | **Wildlife-spotting hike in Corcovado National Park.** |
| **DAY 12** | **Transfer to airstrip and fly to San José.** |
| **DAY 13** | **Transfer to airport for international flight home.** |

# ITINERARY

On this wildlife-focused holiday you explore the Caribbean jungle channels and mangrove forests of the Tortuguero reserve; bathe in naturally heated thermal springs in the shadow of the picture-perfect Arenal volcano, and cruise through wetlands sheltering thousands of migrating birds. Head on to explore the little-visited but bird-prolific Bosque de Paz cloud forest reserve. Finally, move on to the Pacific coast and another wildlife experience at a jungle lodge on the remote Osa Peninsula.

Costa Rica is one of the most rewarding countries in the world for wildlife observation, with a long and impressive history of conservation and eco-tourism allowing species to flourish. The comprehensive network of national parks with their extensive trails is always very accessible. The compact country is bursting with an extraordinary diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna, and this private wildlife observation journey gives you all the opportunity to explore its national parks in various eco-systems.

### DAY 1

**Arrive in San José and transfer to your hotel.**

You will be met at the airport by our local representative who will take you to your hotel in the capital.

### DAY 2

**Fly to Tortuguero National Park.**

Take a short flight from San Jose to Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean coast for a couple of days most rewarding wildlife-spotting. On arrival at the local airstrip, you take a 5-minute boat ride across the river to your lodge. This is true wilderness: it isn't the Caribbean of resort hotels, sugary beaches and *piña coladas*.



## DAY 3



**Wildlife spotting excursion in Tortuguero.**

Set off on a wildlife adventure on a guided boat trip through the mangrove forest of Tortuguero National Park, now one of the last protected areas of tropical rainforest in Central America, with 11 different natural habitats and a huge range of endemic wildlife, much of which can be spotted as you glide through the water. There are 3 species of monkeys (Spider, Howler, and White-faced), Three-toed sloths, and River otters are often seen along the natural inland waterways and canals.

Caimans, iguanas, river turtles, lizards and poison-dart frogs inhabit the area, along with over 320 species of birds including 3 of toucan and 8 of parrot.

The park was originally intended to conserve a major nesting beach of the Atlantic green sea turtle and although less frequent these days you can see leatherbacks too . Visit the nearby turtle museum to gather some information about the nesting cycle of these ancient reptiles. In season, take a night-time walk along the moonlit beach, and search for turtles and their eggs. In season you will have the opportunity to request a private guided turtle observation expedition: if you travel between June and October you might be lucky enough to see them laying their eggs. ( Please ask one of our experts for details)

You'll also have a guided tour of Tortuguero village including a visit to the Caribbean Conservation Corporation Museum. Flanked by rivers and waterways on one side and Caribbean beach on the other, this faraway village serves as a sleepy hub for visitors to the area, human and otherwise.

## DAY 4



**Fly to Arenal.**

Fly to La Fortuna in a Cessna (or equivalent) light aircraft: a 30-minute airborne adventure where you skim over the countryside with volcano views. Land at a small airstrip and continue by road to your hotel.

At 1,674m, Arenal is an impressive conical volcano dominating the surroundings. These days, lava flow and volcanic eruptions are infrequent and there has not been any significant activity since 2010. However, as seismic activity is often unpredictable the situation may change by the time you travel. Even without any recent volcanic activity, the region is still considered to be one of the highlights of a visit to Costa Rica.

## DAY 5

### Excursion to Arenal Volcano & Guided excursion to the Ecotermales hot springs.



The 225-hectare El Silencio Private Reserve is a short drive from La Fortuna and offers a selection of hiking trails in the foothills of Arenal Volcano. Accompanied by a guide who will tell you all about the area's history and geology, you'll follow the 1km Lava Field's trail which climbs up to a viewpoint overlooking the volcano. Although very short, the trail is quite steep in places and generally uneven due to the black jagged rocks which once exploded out of the volcano, most notably in 1968.

In the afternoon there's an excursion to the hot springs at Ecotermales. These waters provide a more off-the-beaten-track experience than their better-known and more overcrowded cousins. Set well back from the road that runs between the lake and the town of La Fortuna, the farm has only recently been opened to the general public. The springs, five free-flowing pools set in a natural river gorge, vary in temperature from 38°C to 43°C depending on the pool.

## DAY 6

### Wildlife spotting in Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge



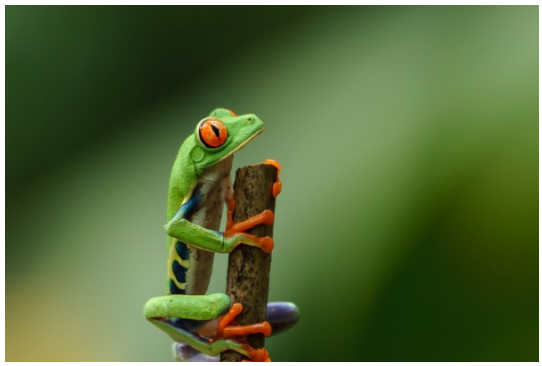
A day trip in the Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge. This remote reserve near the Nicaraguan border is a lowland forested wetland set up to protect migratory birds. It has become renowned for opportunities to observe water-associated birds, especially during migrations.

You'll be picked up by your bilingual guide and taken to the small town of Los Chiles to begin your nature cruise. It's an enchanting 3hr boat trip up the Río Frío through the reserve to Caño Negro lake, a shallow overflow from the river in the wet season (it's dry in March-April). In the months of July-November the reserve acts as a wintering site for migrant American birds. During the dry season the water level steadily falls, until all that is left is the Río Frío's main channel. Most birds make their appearance at this time. These include the Glossy ibis, Black-necked stilt, American widgeon, Northern shoveller, and Snail kite.

Along the shores of the river and in the trees that bend over its waters, you'll be able to spot birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. There are Howler, Spider and White-faced monkeys, Three-toed sloths, caimans, turtles, bats and tropical flora.

## DAY 7

**Transfer to Bajos del Toro.**



It's a 3hr drive to Bajos del Toro in the cloud-forest below Poás volcano, to stay at Bosque de Paz Lodge close to Bosque de Paz Rainforest Reserve. It's a privately-owned reserve with a spectacularly rich ecosystem because of its privileged location on the continental divide, with altitudes ranging from 1,450 to 2,450m. It isn't as well-known or visited as other reserves at this altitude, but is just as stunning, with waterfalls and trout pools, and is the habitat of a wide range of bird and orchid species. It's only a 90min drive from San José, but feels very remote.

The small and friendly lodge embraces easy forest hiking trails and an orchid garden. You can see many hummingbirds flitting between the feeders scattered around the property.

## DAY 8

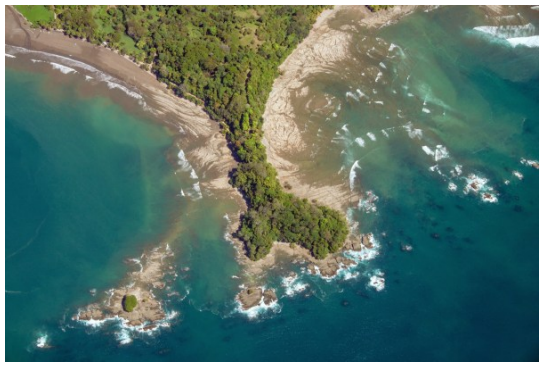
**Birdwatching in Bosque del Paz.**



The reserve is open only to prearranged visits. The number of visitors is limited so that environmental impact is kept at minimum levels, and visitors receive personal attention. The three main objectives here are: conservation, research and education. Most of the earnings are reinvested to purchase more forest to add to the privately protected area. You will have a guided tour of the trails in parts of the reserve from a local guide who can only be booked on site. During your visit, you will have the opportunity to pay a symbolic fee to plant a tree to help with the regeneration of the forest in areas that were once cleared.

### DAY 9

**Transfer to San Jose airport and fly to the Osa Peninsula.**



Transfer to the airport and fly to Palmar Sur on the Osa Peninsula. Wildlife reserves have been established throughout this lush region, notably Corcovado National Park, with magnificent biodiversity, sheltering rare species of mammals including the Central American Squirrel monkey, White-faced capuchin, ocelots and tapirs. Caimans and crocodiles lurk watchful in the dark lagoons. The reserve is absolutely brimming with wildlife, and the diversity of flora is equally mind-boggling. You're bound to see loads of birds, animals and exotic flowering plants.

You will be met at the airport and driven along a paved road to Sierpe, (30mins). Here, embark on a 90min motor-launch ride through forest canals and mangroves. The area has 13 separate ecosystems with almost 100 kinds of tree, over 350 species of bird, and a healthy population of Scarlet macaws, tapirs and jaguars.

### DAY 10

**Snorkelling expedition; whale and dolphin watching in season.**



You'll take a short boat ride to the Coral Garden – a snorkelling haven set in a marine reserve where you can spot manta rays, turtles and small (harmless) White-tipped sharks. Dolphins can be sighted all year round, while Pilot and Humpback whales are more common December – March and July – November. You'll roam the waters for about an hour. Life jackets are provided and we strongly recommend you bring extra water, sun cream, a hat and a swimsuit. Snorkelling equipment is provided.

### DAY 11

**Wildlife-spotting hike in Corcovado National Park.**



This stimulating, adventurous guided tour takes you deep into the heart of Corcovado National Park. You'll take a local boat to the Sirena Ranger Station to set off on a hike – the secluded, remote location allows for prime bird and wildlife spotting. Explore the various trails leading to different areas of the park. As you trek through the verdant primary and secondary rainforest you may well spot some exotic wildlife, such as tapirs, Spider monkeys, Scarlet macaws, White-faced capuchins and Howler monkeys. Bird sightings may include toucans, trogons, hummingbirds, parrots and vultures.

### DAY 12

**Transfer to airstrip and fly to San José.**

Road transfer to airstrip to fly to San José, transfer to hotel for the last night of the holiday.

### DAY 13

**Transfer to airport for international flight home.**

## INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Wildlife watching boat trips in Tortuguero National Park
- Arenal Volcano & Ecotermales hot springs.
- Birdwatching at Caño Negro Reserve.
- Isla del Caño snorkelling; Whale and dolphin watching in season.
- Hiking in Corcovado National Park

# ESSENTIALS

4 flights by light aircraft; scenic road and boat journeys.

This trip combines a small, friendly mid-range hotel in San José with well-equipped rooms with private bathroom with comfortable, eco-friendly but not luxurious wildlife and beach lodges well located for wildlife observation.

Breakfast: daily

Lunch: day 6

Dinner: day 5

Full board: days 2-3, 7-8, 9-11

We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 25 years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by clients on their return. On this particular trip we use specialist naturalist guides where necessary.

13 days, 12 nights: San José 1; Tortuguero 2; Arenal 3; Bajos del Toro 2; Osa Peninsula 3; San Jose 1.

The unit of currency in Costa Rica is the colón.

Cash machines are available in San José: taking a debit or credit card with a PIN number is the most convenient way of withdrawing money while on your trip, and in many shops and restaurants you can also pay by card. However, since cards can get lost, damaged, withheld or blocked, you should not rely exclusively on a card to access funds.

We recommend that additionally you take a reasonable quantity of US dollars cash (no more than is covered by your insurance), which you can exchange into local currency in San José at the beginning of your trip, and possibly some travellers' cheques, though these are increasingly falling out of use. (American Express cheques are the most widely accepted). Dollar bills should be in good condition, soiled or torn bills may be refused. You can exchange sterling but the rate may be unfavourable and there are fewer outlets providing this service. US dollars cash is widely accepted for payments.

It is very difficult to give a guideline for essential expenses but a budget of around US$40 per day should cover the cost of meals not included in the holiday itinerary, drinks and the odd souvenir. Eat at the best restaurants and you will pay considerably more.

Tips are expected and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income.

Most service industry workers will expect a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 – 12% in restaurants.

Travel insurance is essential.
Details of our recommended policy can be found on our Travel Insurance page.

If you have purchased your flights through Journey Latin America, the international departure tax is usually included in the ticket.

Generally this holiday is suitable for all able, reasonably fit visitors, including families with older children with an interest in wildlife.

Bear in mind it is a relatively active trip. On the whole the trails are good and clear. All activities are closely monitored by qualified guides.

The trip covers climates ranging from tropical lowland to more temperate zones in the highlands. Those travelling

between May and October journeys should encounter high temperatures (around 35°C) and high humidity in the lowlands. The 'official' rainy (green) season is May to October.

December to April visitors will still encounter high temperatures in lowland areas, but cool evenings around Arenal and San José with temperatures falling to around 5°C. Rainfall and humidity will be lower at this time.

Bring plenty of light cotton clothing and good, comfortable walking shoes. A waterproof jacket is also necessary. We suggest that you plan to 'layer' your clothing; it is easier and more efficient to put on a couple of light layers than one thick jumper (it can be cool in the interior), and sensible to have long sleeves for areas where mosquitos may be lurking. Protection against the sun (sunblock, sun hat) and mosquito repellant are essential and you should bring swimwear. A daypack is useful for carrying sunblock, guidebook, water and any extra layers.

Don't forget your binoculars, long lens camera and field guide.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts. Good equipment is very important and hard to come by in Central America.

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following; typhoid; polio; tetanus; hepatitis A. For specific requirements you must consult your GP.

You can also find helpful information on the Masta Travel Health website.

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports must be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Anyone with a different nationality should enquire with us or check with the relevant consulate.

If flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your online ESTA application.

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## GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

**0208 747 8315**

**OPENING HOURS**

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

**SEND US AN EMAIL**

**tours@journeylatinamerica.com**