JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

VALUE COSTA RICA: THE ESSENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

12 days from **£1,900pp**

COSTA RICA / SAN JOSE, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND CENTRAL VALLEYS / CARIBBEAN COAST / ARENAL AND THE NORTH / MONTEVERDE AND THE CLOUD FOREST / PACIFIC COAST



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

An economical holiday including the top highlights: boating through tropical mangroves on the Caribbean, exploring volcanic landscapes and lodging in mountain cloud-forest before lazing on a Pacific coast beach.

DAY 1	**Arrive in San José and transfer to your hotel.**
DAY 2	**By road and boat to Tortuguero National Park.**
DAY 3	**Wildlife spotting in Tortuguero National Park.**
DAY 4	**By boat and road to Arenal.**
DAY 5	**Hiking in the foothills of Arenal Volcano**
DAY 6	**Optional excursions in Arenal**
DAY 7	**Transfer by shuttle bus to Monteverde.**
DAY 8	**Guided excursion to the Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve.**
DAY 9	**Transfer by shuttle bus to Manuel Antonio on the Pacific Coast**
DAY 10	**Guided excursion to Manuel Antonio National Park.**
DAYS 11	**At leisure or optional excursions**
DAY 12	**Transfer by shuttle bus to San José airport for your international flight home.**

ITINERARY

This short budget holiday saves you money by using modern, shared minibuses for transport between hotels. Combine outdoor adventures with beach wind-down time on the Pacific coast. Costa Rica is bursting with an extraordinary diversity of flora and fauna and its people are among the friendliest in Latin America. The comprehensive network of national parks with their extensive trails is very accessible.

Begin your trip visiting the Caribbean jungle waterways and mangrove forests of the wildlife-rich Tortuguero reserve; Move on to Arenal and chose from a variety of activities in the shadow of the picture-perfect volcano; Discover the densely packed canopy in the Monteverde cloud forest, with its rich bird and animal life in view; before travelling to the Pacific coast for a couple of days' relaxation at a hotel close to Manuel Antonio National Park.

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 modern capital.

DAY 2

By road and boat to Tortuguero National Park.



Drive from San José through the misty cloud forest of Braulio Carrillo National Park to the sultry lowlands of the Caribbean Coast and the small dock at La Pavona (3 hours). It's then a 1 ½ hours boat ride along canals and through mangroves before you arrive in the small, ramshackle village of Tortuguero, which gives you an insight into the way of life in this remote region. Your lodge is a short distance away but only accessible by boat.

Tortuguero National Park was originally intended to conserve a major nesting beach of the Atlantic green sea turtle. Now it is one of the last protected areas of tropical rainforest in Central America, with 11 different natural habitats. 3 species of monkeys (Spider, Howler, and White-faced), Three-toed sloths, and river otters are frequently seen along the natural inland waterways and canals.

Caimans, iguanas, river turtles, basilisk lizards and poison-dart frogs inhabit the area, along with more than 320 species of birds including all 6 species of kingfishers, 3 species of toucans, 8 species of parrot, and other tropical species such as the Slate-tailed trogon, White-collared manakin, Purple-throated fruit crow, and White-fronted nun bird.

DAY 3

Wildlife spotting in Tortuguero National Park.

The waters in the national park are black, owing to tannins from trees in the area, and flow slowly. Spend a couple of hours gently meandering the canals in a guided boat, spotting birds, mammals, and reptiles in beautiful scenery. The early start means you will see the wildlife at its most active. The remaining time can be spent relaxing at your lodge or participating in some of the activities available. These include a visit to Tortuguero village and the Sea Turtle Conservancy Visitor Centre, and, in season (July – October) watching Green Sea and Hawksbill turtles nest.



DAY 4

By boat and road to Arenal.

Return to La Pavona by boat (1 ½ hours) before continuing by shared shuttle bus to your hotel close to La Fortuna, in the shadow of Arenal Volcano (3 hours).



DAY 5

Hiking in the foothills of Arenal Volcano

Although eruptions and lava flows are infrequent these days – there hasn't been any significant activity since 2010 – the perfectly conical Arenal Volcano is still an impressive sight. On a shared tour to the El Silencio Private Reserve you'll hike across lava fields from previous eruptions (most notably in 1968) to a superb viewpoint overlooking the volcano. Keep an eye out for wildlife too with toucans, orioles, peccaries, and monkeys commonly seen.



DAY 6

Optional excursions in Arenal

Today you have a free day to explore the region. There are many adventurous excursions on offer including: kayaking on Lake Arenal; whitewater rafting on the Río Balsa; walking through the rainforest canopy on a network of hanging bridges; ziplining; and canyoning. Alternatively, near the border with Nicaragua, you can take an enchanting boat trip through the Caño Negro Wildlife Reserve, a lowland forested wetland teaming with wildlife and hundreds of species of bird.



DAY 7

Transfer by shuttle bus to Monteverde.

Take a ferry across Lake Arenal (40 minutes) and continue by road to Monteverde (2 hours). High up in the rolling Cordillera de Tilarán mountain range, Monteverde is surrounded by native cloud forest, a misty and magical ecosystem rich in wildlife.



DAY 8

Guided excursion to the Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve.

The Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve sits at a slightly higher elevation (over 1,500m) than the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. Founded in 1992 by a group of Canadian volunteers, it receives far fewer visitors than its better-known neighbour but has just as many species: quetzals, deer, sloths, ocelots and howler and capuchin monkeys. There are 12km of trails, three lookout points, and an observation tower from which you can see five volcanoes on a clear day. It's an atmospheric place with mosses, ferns and flowers embellishing the trees, while vines dangle over the trails.



DAY 9

Transfer by shuttle bus to Manuel Antonio on the Pacific Coast

Travel by shared shuttle bus to Manuel Antonio on the Pacific coast (4 hours). When we first went there 40 years ago, its beaches were visited only by monkeys and backpackers. Now you'll find tourists from all over the world but it's still a gorgeous place graced with exquisite natural beauty.



DAY 10

Guided excursion to Manuel Antonio National Park.

Manuel Antonio National Park is one of the smallest but best regarded national parks in Costa Rica. Its setting is lovely – wild, tropical beaches and rocky outcrops backed by lush forest. It has a network of trails where you may see a variety of reptiles, as well as monkeys, sloths, armadillos, racoons and over 350 species of birds.



DAYS 11

At leisure or optional excursions

Time to sit back and relax on the beach or by your hotel's swimming pool. If you're looking to do something more active, we can arrange for you to go kayaking through the mangroves of the Damas Island estuary, 15km north of Manuel Antonio.



DAY 12

Transfer by shuttle bus to San José airport for your international flight home.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Canal tour in Tortuguero National Park
- Hiking in El Silencio Nature Reserve in the foothills of Arenal volcano
- Guided visit to the Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve
- Guided visit to Manuel Antonio National Park

ESSENTIALS

5 road journeys, 2 boat transfers, and 1 short ferry ride.

This trip combines friendly mid-range hotels with well-equipped rooms, as well as comfortable but not luxurious wildlife and beach lodges. Accommodation throughout Costa Rica is of a high standard.

Breakfast daily; full board on days 2 & 3.

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.

12 days, 11 nights: San José 1; Tortuguero 2; Arenal 3; Monteverde 2; Manuel Antonio 3.

The unit of currency in Costa Rica is the colón.

Cash machines are available in San José, La Fortuna (Arenal) and Santa Elena (Monteverde). 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 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.

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.

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.

Departure tax from San José is normally included in the price of your airline ticket.

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.

TRIP SUITABILITY

Generally this holiday is suitable for all able, reasonably fit visitors, including families with children.

Transport is by regular fixed-route and fixed-time shared minibus, which will collect you from and deliver you to your hotels.

Bear in mind it is a relatively active trip. On the whole trails are good and easy to follow.

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 November.

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 much lower at this time.

For your beach wind-down on the Pacific coast good weather is a priority, so most visits are in the dry season December to April when there is plenty of sun. It's hot all year round (often over 30°C). The busy times for visitors are the dry season months, especially weekends and Easter week. The green (i.e. rainy) season is much quieter.

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, and sensible to have long sleeves for areas where mosquitos may be lurking. Sandals are a good informal option for evenings. Protection against the sun (sunblock, sun hat) and mosquito repellent are essential and you should bring swimwear. A daypack is useful for carrying sunblock, guidebook, water and any extra layers. If you have your own binoculars we strongly recommend taking them.

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.

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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