JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

EXPLORE AND RELAX IN COSTA RICA: VOLCANOES TO THE BEACH

11 days from **£4,100pp**

COSTA RICA / SAN JOSE, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND CENTRAL VALLEYS / ARENAL AND THE NORTH / MONTEVERDE AND THE CLOUD FOREST / NICOYA PENINSULA



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

Stay in gorgeous countryside properties and eco-lodges to explore volcanic landscapes, bird-filled cloudforest before lazing at a top Pacific beach resort.

DAY 1	**Arrive in San José and transfer to countryside resort..**
DAY 2	**At leisure on the property.**
DAY 3	**By road to Arenal volcano area.**
DAY 4	**Excursion to Arenal Volcano.**
DAY 5	**Optional hanging bridges, lake kayaking or Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge.**
DAY 6	**Drive to Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve; twilight tour.**
DAY 7	**Guided exploration of Santa Elena Reserve.**
DAY 8	**Transfer to beach resort hotel on the Nicoya Peninsula, Pacific coast.**
DAYS 9-10	**At leisure on the beach.**
DAY 11	**Transfer to airport for international flight home.**

ITINERARY

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 always very accessible. This short holiday uses modern, shared minibuses for transport between hotels.

Begin your adventure with a couple of days exploring the beautiful landscapes in the shadow of the picture-perfect Arenal Volcano. Move on to discover the densely packed canopy in the Monteverde cloud forest, with its rich bird and animal life on display. After this, travel to the Pacific coast and stay at a beach resort on the Nicoya Peninsula for a few days' relaxation.

DAY 1

Arrive in San José and transfer to countryside resort..

You will be met at the airport by our local representative who will take you to your hotel in the attractive fertile countryside of Costa Rica's Central Valley.

DAY 2

At leisure on the property.

At leisure at the property: Xandari Resort & Spa is more than just a hotel –the private forest reserve, with five waterfalls and many of trails for bird-watching give you an introduction to Costa Rica's abundant wildlife and rich tropical landscapes. Enjoy the well tended gardens, the orchid house, and the farm. The Spa provides ample opportunity to unwind and to relax.



DAY 3

By road to Arenal volcano area.

Drive to the Arenal volcano region. As the sun begins to set, you might hike across a barren landscape dotted with rocks and shrubs, from which you may see the flows of molten lava being discharged from Arenal's fiery cone (although the volcano can be dormant for months so there is no guarantee of its activity and there hasn't been any for some years).



DAY 4

Excursion to Arenal Volcano.



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.

DAY 5

Optional hanging bridges, lake kayaking or Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge.



Today you have a free day to explore the region. Maybe walk the 3km long canopy trail through primary forest linked by 6 hanging bridges and 8 fixed bridges, some measuring up to 22m in length. Along with the region's diverse wildlife and plants you can expect good views of the volcano.

Alternatively, kayak on lake Arenal at the foot of the volcano or explore Caño Negro Wildlife Reserve. Tours operate along Río Frío, a slow-flowing river that winds through canyons on its way to the Caño Negro Lake. Along the shores of the river and in the trees you'll be able to spot birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. There are howler, spider and white-faced monkeys, three-toed sloth, caimans, turtles, and lizards. Keep your eyes on the river, too – there's the chance of spotting the fin of a freshwater shark as it slices above the water's surface.

DAY 6

Drive to Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve; twilight tour.



Travel inland by road into highlands mantled by the woodland of Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, which lies in the rugged, rolling hills northwest of San José. You'll be driven through the Central Valley along the Pan American Highway, a decent paved road then take the turn off for Monteverde, and here the adventure begins – for up to 90mins the dirt road is bumpy with volcanic rocks, winding up through the hills to the cloud forest at 1,400m. You can expect it to be dusty in the dry season and muddy in the wet. However you should be diverted by wildlife you spot along the way – sloth, monkeys and tropical birds – keep your binoculars handy.

The Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve is one of the most fascinating wildlife sanctuaries in the Americas; it protects more than 400 species of bird and 100 species of mammal. It has many well-marked trails, amidst dense, dripping foliage, sheltering the resplendent quetzal, with its vivid red belly and long green tail, as well as the endangered bellbird and the emerald toucanet. 30 species of hummingbird also reside there.

On your 2hr night walk you'll look out for nocturnal animals such as olingos, kinkajous, two-toed sloths and opossums, as well as tarantula spiders and snakes. During the rainy season some species of frogs might be spotted. It's not uncommon to see migrant and resident birds sleeping. Regardless of the wildlife you may see, the experience of walking in the forest at night is very special.

DAY 7

Guided exploration of Santa Elena Reserve.



Santa Elena Reserve sits at a slightly higher elevation (over 1,500m) than the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. It was founded in 1992 by a group of Canadian volunteers to preserve the cloud forest which hosts quetzals, deer, sloths, ocelots and howler, and capuchin monkeys. There are around 12 km of trails, three lookout points and an observation tower from which on a clear day you can spy five volcanoes. It's an atmospheric place with mosses, ferns and flowers embellishing the trees, while vines dangle over the trails. Your adventure is led by a local guide.

In the afternoon there's an optional visit to a coffee finca. Don Juan Cruz was born to one of the first pioneering farming families to arrive in the Monteverde area and welcomes visitors to his small farm. You'll learn about the entire coffee- and chocolate-making processes using authentic techniques which date back several generations.

DAY 8

Transfer to beach resort hotel on the Nicoya Peninsula, Pacific coast.

Travel by road (5hrs) to the Nicoya Peninsula on the Pacific coast. Equally denuded of forest as the adjoining mainland, it is culturally and physically cut off from the rest of the country: inland, dotted with small, modest towns far removed from the beach resorts on the bay-pocked coastline. You'll be staying one of these, within reach of yawning beaches attacked by crashing Pacific rollers.



DAYS 9-10

At leisure on the beach.

Many activities can be arranged form the resort if you don't want to spend all your time sunning yourself beside the pool or watching tangerine sunsets over the ocean with a cold beer in your hand. Golf and hiking, horse-riding, snorkelling and mountain biking expeditions are all available.



DAY 11

Transfer to airport for international flight home.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Arenal: Guided excursion to Arenal Volcano
- Monteverde: guided night walk
- Monteverde: Guided exploration of Santa Elena Reserve

ESSENTIALS

4 scenic road journeys.

This trip combines friendly hotels with a comfortable eco-lodge and first class beach resort.

Breakfast daily.

We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 30 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.

11 days, 10 nights: San José 2; Arenal 3; Monteverde 2; Nicoya Peninsula 3.

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 airport. 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. 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 welcome 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.

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 nevertheless collect you from and deliver you to your hotels.

The trip covers climates ranging from tropical 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 and/or umbrella are also advisable. 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 repellant are essential and you should bring swimwear. A daypack is useful for carrying sunblock, guidebook, water and any extra layers. Although guides carry binoculars we recommend you take your own if you have 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

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