



Colours of Costa Rica

Active Immerse Yourself Tour | 17 Days | Physical Level 3

San Jose - Tortuguero – Sarapiquí – Arenal – Monteverde – Manuel Antonio

One of the planet's most biodiverse destinations and a poster child for eco-tourism, Costa Rica is a colourful, peaceful and bountiful country. From the tropical beaches to lush rainforest, you will explore this natural paradise, spending time in beautiful national parks, viewing volcanoes and meeting the friendly local people.

- Discover the jungle and waterways of Tortuguero
- Stand in the shadow of Arenal Volcano
- Trail the elusive quetzal in Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve
- Bathe off the Pacific beaches of Manuel Antonio



Colours of Costa Rica tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated
- Touring with guides and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking local guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. meals, drinks, visas, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary

Central America Active Immerse Yourself Tours:

Active tours combine the key sights with more energetic pursuits such as hiking and cycling. This allows us to explore more and discover the destination in greater depth. These tours are designed to provide a wide range of activities to ensure a varied and culturally immersive experience. These tours include:

- Cycling or walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

Physical Level 3:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights. 'Colours of Costa Rica' is rated 3 on the physical level scale. A good level of fitness is required as you need to be comfortable walking for 2-3 hours and covering longer distances.

- There is a lot of walking on this tour, particularly through national parks and rainforest. Whilst walkways as well maintained you will spend a lot of time on your feet, and there will be some walking on an incline.
- You will be required, on several occasions, to climb on and off boats without assistance.

Of course, our Local Guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 17 days in duration including international flights. Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on Day 1 in San Jose and end the tour on Day 15 in San Jose. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary – Colours of Costa Rica

Day 1: Arrive San José

Meals included: Dinner

Fly to San José, Costa Rica's vibrant, charming capital, arriving the same day due to crossing the International Date Line. You will be met at the airport and transferred approximately 40 minutes to your hotel. Enjoy the rest of the evening at leisure before a welcome dinner tonight

Destination Information

San Jose – Located in the centre of the country, San Jose is the most important political, economic and social centre of the Costa Rican territory. It can be considered, almost in its totality, to have a complete European cultural influence.

Day 2: Discover La Paz Waterfall Gardens

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning, head out of the city to explore the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, a 70-acre natural paradise. Two miles of trails wind their way through native flora in forests, gardens and five waterfalls – keep your eye out for a multitude of fascinating wildlife.



Destination Information

La Paz Waterfall Gardens – Just one hour outside of San José, here you can walk two miles of forested trails that lead to five spectacular waterfalls. La Paz also gives you the opportunity to learn about Costa Rica's flora and fauna in the butterfly observatory, hummingbird garden and orchid garden.

Day 3: San Jose - Tortuguero

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Rise early this morning and transfer approximately 4 hours from San José to the dock and take a boat to Tortuguero. The dock used on the day will be determined by the water level of the river. You will need to climb on and off the boat directly onto a river beach with your bags. Only accessible by boat or plane, Tortuguero exudes a relaxed Afro-Caribbean vibe. Spend the afternoon in the village, with the jungle and waterways on one side and on the other, blissful Caribbean beach.

Please note that while in Tortuguero luggage is limited to 25 pounds (12 Kg) per person, so you must take a small bag with the things you need for this part of the trip. The rest of your luggage will be taken to meet you when you arrive back in Guapiles on Day 5



Destination Information

Tortuguero – Located on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, Tortuguero is a town and a national park on a narrow coastal strip separated from the mainland by several waterways. Wonderfully laidback, the culture here has strong Afro-Caribbean vibes, differentiating it from the rest of the country. There are long stretches of beach, canals and rainforest, all packed with wildlife, including crocodiles, and is an important breeding ground for the Green Turtle (July to September) as well as several other species.

Day 4: Explore the rainforest**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

The Tortuguero area is full of biological diversity, with habitats including rainforest, swamp and lagoon. The beaches are a nesting ground for Green Turtles between July and September, whilst the rivers are home to caimans, crocodiles and manatees and the forest boasts jaguars, sloths, monkeys and 375 species of birds. Exploring it will be a real adventure! This morning take a boat trip on the area's waterways to spot the local wildlife.

Destination Information

Boat trip – Explore the canals of the Tortuguero National Park on a leisurely-paced canal boat. As you cruise along you can enjoy the lush biodiversity of the area, spotting monkeys (there are three different species), iguanas, crocodiles, alligators, turtles, manatees and 400 species of birds.

Day 5: Tortuguero to Sarapiquí**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch**

Depart Tortuguero by boat and transfer to a local restaurant in Guapiles for lunch, before journeying approximately 2 hours to Sarapiquí at the heart of Costa Rica's northern lowlands, nestled amongst lush rainforest. Check in to your rainforest lodge accommodation and settle in.

Destination Information

Sarapiquí – Located in the northern lowlands, Sarapiquí is wholly tropical, full of lush fruit plantations and covered in rainforest. The region is also known for its adventure activities, such as white water rafting, and for its biodiversity – it is one of the last few areas in Costa Rica where you can find the endangered Green Macaw and has a number of national parks and reserves.

Day 6: Sarapiquí to Arenal**Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner**

Take a tour dedicated to chocolate at La Tirimbina. Crossing the suspension bridge, visit a former cacao-tree plantation where you'll learn from your trained guide about the history of the tree and its lucrative fruit. Watch the chocolate-making process first-hand and have a taste of the final product. The chocolate is produced by the Asociacion de Mujeres Amazilia del Caribe, a group of local women who are working to improve their lives through social enterprise and to rescue the native cacao tree. You will need to wear closed shoes or boots for this tour. Transfer by road to the Arenal area, a journey of around 2 hours, named after the magnificent Arenal Volcano.

Destination Information

La Tirimbina – An eco-tourism destination that offers education and research, Tirimbina has abundant forest full of a huge diversity of flora and fauna. Exploring the forest involves crossing suspension bridges and discovering native species, including the cacao plant.

Day 7: Mistico Park

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

In the shadow of Arenal, the Mistico Park gives a whole new perspective of the rainforest with a series of suspension bridges at canopy level. As you walk through the trees, you'll be able to spot all sorts of wildlife, birds, flowers and vegetation. Spend the day walking the easy trails (there are some steeper up and down sections) and taking in your beautiful natural surroundings.

**Destination Information**

Mistico Park – Located within the Volcano Arenal National Park, Mistico Park is formed of a series of suspension bridges and trails that run for 3 kilometres through a private rainforest reserve. The forest here is transitional, running from tropical into wet forest, making it extremely high in biodiversity. There are 15 bridges in total, 6 of which are hanging (will move under foot) – from many of them you will get wonderful views of the volcano and Lake Arenal.

Day 8: Arenal to Monteverde

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Travel to Arenal Lake dock and cruise for 45 minutes in a pontoon boat across Arenal Lake to the little town of Rio Chiquito. This lake is Costa Rica's largest, especially since it tripled in size with the construction of the Arenal Dam in 1979. The views of Arenal volcano as you cruise will be fantastic. Transfer the rest of the way to Monteverde by road, travelling up into the highlands. Enjoy an afternoon tour of the Don Juan coffee estate where you'll learn all about the coffee making process, from harvest to processing, and the humble coffee bean itself.

Destination Information

Volcan Arenal – An active volcano standing at 1,633 metres tall, Arenal is a 'young' volcano at about 7,500 years old. Up until 2010, when it became dormant, Arenal was one of the most active volcanoes in the world. Its conical cone is one of Costa Rica's most well-known sights.

Day 9: Discover the cloud forest

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Spend the day exploring the natural wonders of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve with a guide. This reserve covers 26,000 acres of virgin forest which a huge amount of Costa Rica's native flora and fauna call home. Cloud Forest is a highland rainforest, characterised by the clouds and fogs that settle in the lush canopy – the humidity here hovers at around 100%! The reserve shelters jaguars, pumas and over 450 species of bird, including the quetzal. Trails throughout the reserve are well-maintained but can be muddy.

Destination Information

Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve – One of the most famous conservation areas in Central America, Monteverde consists of 26,000 acres of cloud forest, 90% of which is virgin. At 1,440 metres above sea level, the area is cloud forest rather than rainforest and within the reserve there are 2,500 plant species, 100 mammal species, 400 bird species and 120 reptilian and amphibian species. This is the best place to try and spot the resplendent quetzal, a beautiful bird native to Central America.

Day 10: Monteverde to Manuel Antonio

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Travel down from Monteverde to the lush lowlands and dazzling white sands of the Pacific coast. This transfer takes approximately 5 hours. Set amongst verdant nature is the oceanside village of Manuel Antonio where you will spend the next two nights.

Day 11: Manuel Antonio National Park

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Enjoy a guided hike of Manuel Antonio National Park, Costa Rica's most protected area. There is a huge range of breathtaking flora and fauna here – as you stroll the park's trails, keep an eye out for white-faced capuchin monkeys, raccoons and a range of beautiful bird species. There'll also be time to have a dip in the warm Pacific waters. As with Costa Rica's other national parks, the trails here are well-maintained and well-marked.



Destination Information

Manuel Antonio National Park – Providing shelter to many of Costa Rica's endangered species, Manuel Antonio may be Costa Rica's smallest park but it is considered as one of the best. Internationally, this park is considered one of the most biodiverse in the world and covers a diverse range of eco-systems, from tropical forest to lagoons, mangroves and beaches. 109 species of mammal prowl the park and 184 species of bird whilst there are also four beautiful beaches which you can enjoy.

Day 12: Relax in Manuel Antonio

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Take a day at leisure in Manuel Antonio. You can use the time to explore the area farther or enjoy a bit of relaxation on the beautiful Pacific beaches.

Day 13: Manuel Antonio to San José

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Depart Manuel Antonio and begin the journey back to San José, which takes around 4 hours stopping en route at the Carara National Park. Enjoy the diverse nature of a transitional forest, a mix of dry tropical reserve and humid jungle created by changes in topography. It is home to many mammals and plant and tree species as well as the rare Scarlet Macaw. The trails here are well-maintained and make for easy walking. Arrive in San José.

Destination Information

Carara National Park – Close to capital San José, this popular national park occupies a transitional zone from dry tropical forest to humid jungle habitats, making it wonderfully unique. 'Carara' means crocodile in the native 'Huetar' language, and there are many that call the park home, alongside white-face capuchin monkeys, scarlet macaws, toucans, peccaries, anteaters and poison-arrow frogs.

Day 14: Rainforest Aerial Tram

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Today you will glide gently through the rainforest canopy aboard the Rainforest Aerial Tram, located in a private reserve. The tram travels at a leisurely pace, covering 2.6 kilometres, giving you the chance to examine the many layers of the rainforest canopy and the flora and fauna that call it home.

**Destination Information**

Rainforest Aerial Tram – The aerial tram travels slowly through the rainforest canopy, giving you a unique opportunity to spot plants and watch birds from a new vantage point. The journey takes about 1 hour 20 minutes. Each tram seats six people plus a nature guide, and is open air with a canvas awning. Part of a private reserve, a visit here also includes a guided nature walk so you can see the rainforest from all levels.

Day 15-17: Fly San José to Australia

Meals included: Breakfast

Transfer to the airport, approximately and fly to the UK, arriving home the following day.

There's a departure tax of \$29 USD when leaving Costa Rica by air. Many airlines have started to include this in ticket prices; others have still not done so. We will advise you in your final documents whether you need to pay this separately. If so you can pay by cash or credit or debit card, in US dollars or local colones.

Colours of Costa Rica Travel Information

Visas

Australian passport holders currently do not require a visa to enter Costa Rica. Your passport needs to be valid for at least six months beyond your intended return date to Australia. Wendy Wu Tours does not provide a visa service for Worldwide tours. To stay up to date with the latest visa requirements, visit www.smartraveller.gov.au It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your Local Guide should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Eating in Costa Rica

Costa Rican cuisine is a combination of influences of both the colonial Spanish and Afro-Caribbeans. The food is mild, and has a high reliance on fresh fruit and vegetables – which isn't much of a surprise when you consider Costa Rica's huge biodiversity. Staple foods include rice and black beans, which are served at most meals, alongside plantain and grilled or sautéed meat or fish.

A typical breakfast is Gallo Pinto – rice and beans stir-fried together and served with eggs and sour cream or cheese, whilst a typical lunch, casado, is rice and beans (not mixed) with meat and a salad. Both are delicious and seasoned beautifully with local herbs and vegetables. The indigenous people of the Central American region ate corn as a large part of their diet, and it still features today. Tamales, for example, were introduced by the Aztecs and are still eaten at celebrations, especially Christmas. These are a dough of cornmeal, lard and spices stuffed with meat, rice and vegetables and steamed in a leaf. Another food not too miss are empanadas, a delicious snack. Similar to a Cornish pasty but with a corn-based dough, these are filled with beef, chicken, cheese or fruit.

Whilst we strongly recommend trying as many local dishes as possible, Costa Rica also has a wide range of international foods available – Chinese and Italian are particularly popular.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to rainforest lodges. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality may exist between the Australia and Costa Rica. All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities and air conditioning where needed. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your Local Guide. Rest assure that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers between destinations. Roads in Costa Rica have generally been improved over recent years, but please be aware traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. There may be sections of road where the surface may be comparatively bumpy but our drivers will do their utmost to lessen the impact.

Clothing

On this tour, you will be travelling through various regions of Costa Rica with quite diverse climates especially in whilst in the cloud forests of Arenal to the tropical climate in on the coast in Manuel Antonio. It is recommended to bring lots of layers including the following: T Shirts made of breathable materials, hiking pants, with the option to turn into a short pant (rain pants optional), a fleece jacket for colder parts and the evenings and a waterproof Jacket as shell layer or a light rain jacket, a scarf and hat, warm socks. The climate in Cartagena is tropical, humid and warm we recommend to, wear light weight breathable clothing. A small back pack that fits into your main hand luggage to carry your daily essentials.

Souvenirs

There are plenty of interesting bits and pieces to buy as souvenirs in Costa Rica, such as indigenous handicrafts and artworks, coffee and chocolate, carved wood and products made from the abundance of exotic local fruits, such as jams, jellies and sweets. There will be some opportunities during your tour to pick up souvenirs.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more, there will usually be no more than 28 travellers in each group. All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in South & Central America. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much. For your convenience, with years of experience in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on your Group Tour so your Local Guide will look after this aspect of the trip for you. This ensures the amounts paid are reasonable for you and still fair to the local people. The suggested total amount is specified for each Group Tour and will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is paid in USD or other local currencies if specified. Any additional tipping you feel is appropriate is welcomed at your discretion.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure

Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Before You Leave

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au.

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smarttraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

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