



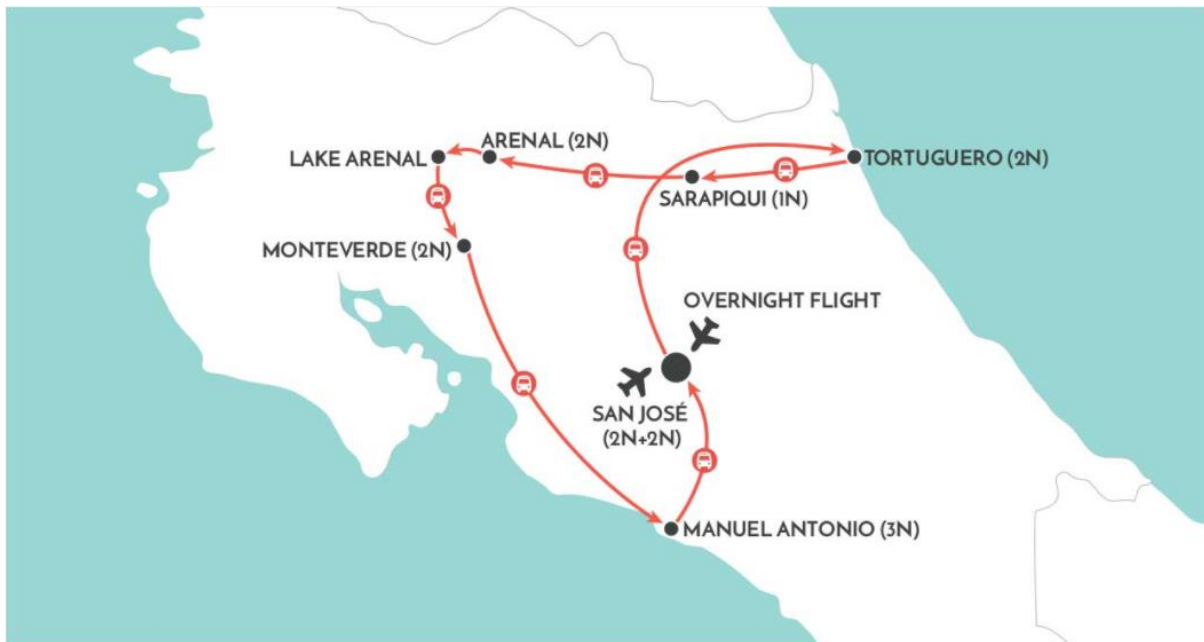
Colours of Costa Rica

Classic Tour | 15 Days | Physical Level 1

San José- 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 breath-taking national parks, viewing volcanoes and meeting the friendly local people.

- Walk along hanging bridges
- Discover the jungle and waterways of Tortuguero
- Visit Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, home to the resplendent quetzal
- Enjoy a cultural chocolate tasting tour in the secluded region of Sarapiquí



Colours of Costa Rica tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with AFTA, ATAS and CATO

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

Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Latin America on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully inclusive basis our dedicated and professional National Escort and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Physical Level 1:

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 1 on the physical level scale. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You will be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

Of course, our National Escorts and 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.

Country Profile: Costa Rica

Costa Rica is Central America's utopian wonderland, filled with remarkable natural wonders and an incredible array of wildlife. The welcoming people of Costa Rica embrace 'pura vida' – the 'pure life' – and as the world's first carbon neutral country, they are thriving example of ethical, eco-tourism. Blessed with pristine Pacific and Caribbean coasts, spectacular beaches, volcanoes, lush forests and an array of bizarre and mysterious wildlife, holiday destinations don't get much more exotic than Costa Rica.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 15 days in duration, including international flights.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, 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 13 in San Jose. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention 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 maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Itinerary – Colours of Costa Rica

Day 1: Arrive San José

Fly to San José, Costa Rica's capital, arriving the same day due to crossing the International Date Line. You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Depending on your time of arrival the rest of the day is yours to start soaking up the local culture.



Destination Information

San José – 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 to have a complete European cultural influence.

Day 2: Discover Poas Volcano & La Paz

Today head out of the city to explore Poás Volcano National Park. You will hike to the edge of the crater, from which you can see gas and water vapour spitting and hissing from the surface. Afterwards, continue to 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. *Please note in event of volcanic activity the park will shut and so an alternative San Jose city tour will be arranged.*



Destination Information

Poás Volcano National Park – Centred around the 2,700 metre Poás Volcano, one of Costa Rica's largest and most active, this national park offers a range of different habitats to explore. Well-developed, the paths of the park are paved right the way up to the crater rim, where you can look down on a sulfuric pool that bubbles and steams, and watch geysers explode high into the air. There is also lots of wildlife to spot amongst the lush rainforest – including 79 species of bird and small mammals such as marmots and coyotes.

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

Rise early this morning and transfer approximately four hours from San José to the docks 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 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.



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, and the area is packed with wildlife. Tortuguero is also an important breeding ground for the Green Turtle (July to September) as well as several other species.

Day 4: Explore the Rainforest

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 you will enjoy a leisurely jungle walk along the trails around your hotel before an afternoon boat trip through the area's waterways to spot the local wildlife. Your day will finish with a stop at a local café to learn about Costa Rica’s Caribbean gastronomy.

Day 5: Tortuguero to Sarapiquí

Depart Tortuguero by boat and transfer to a local restaurant in Guapiles for lunch, before journeying approximately two 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

Puerto Viejo de 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 several national parks and reserves.

Day 6: Chocolate Tour

Embark on a cultural chocolate tour at La Tirimbina. Crossing the suspension bridge, visit a former cacao-tree plantation where you will learn 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. Transfer by road to the Arenal area this afternoon, 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 Hanging Bridges

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. Keep an eye out for sloths, monkeys and toucans (among other species) as you walk through the trees. Spend the day walking the easy trails 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

Travel to Arenal Lake and transfer into a boat for your 45-minute cruise 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 will learn all about the coffee making process, from harvest to processing, and the humble coffee bean itself.



Destination Information

Arenal Volcano – 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 Central America, with its conical cone being one of Costa Rica's most well-known sights.

Day 9: Discover the Cloud Forest

Spend the day exploring the natural wonders of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. This reserve covers 26,000 acres of virgin forest which a huge amount of Costa Rica's native flora and fauna call home. The 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 famous resplendent quetzal. Please note that the trails throughout the reserve are well-maintained but can be muddy, so wearing the appropriate footwear is advisable.



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

Travel down from Monteverde, descending in altitude through the misty cloud forest before entering the lush and humid lowlands to the south. On the way, you will stop at Carara National Park for a walk along the trails to see fauna including the magnificent Scarlet Macaw – an endangered species but one that typifies Costa Rica’s stunning biodiversity. Afterwards, you will continue towards the dazzling white sands of the Pacific Coast. Here, set amongst verdant nature is the oceanside town of Manuel Antonio where you will spend the next two nights.



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-faced capuchin monkeys, scarlet macaws, toucans, peccaries, anteaters and poison-arrow frogs.

Day 11: Manuel Antonio National Park

Enjoy a guided hike of Manuel Antonio National Park today. 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 will 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. This afternoon you have as time at leisure.



Destination Information

Manuel Antonio National Park – Providing shelter for 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: Manuel Antonio to San José

Depart Manuel Antonio this afternoon and begin the journey back to San José. You will spend your final night in the capital, with a farewell dinner this evening before your flight tomorrow.

Days 13-15: Fly San José to Australia

Transfer to the airport and fly to Australia. Arrive home in two days due to crossing the International Date Line once again.

There is a departure tax of US\$29 when leaving Costa Rica by air. Many airlines have started to include this in ticket prices; however, others have still not done so. Please do be prepared to pay this. If so, you can pay by cash or credit or debit card, in US dollars or local Costa Rican colones.

Colours of Costa Rica Travel Information

Visas

Australian passport holders currently do not require a visa to enter Costa Rica. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia. To stay up to date with the latest visa requirements, visit www.smarttraveller.gov.au

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

Eating in Costa Rica

Costa Rican cuisine is a combination of influences of both the colonial Spanish and Afro-Caribbean. 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 to 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.

Drinking bottled water and eating well-cooked food is strongly recommended. It is much safer to stick to bottled, treated or boiled water. Ice, along with salads or fruits washed in tap water should likewise be avoided.

Those with dietary requirements will be well catered for - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip.

All the restaurants we visit will be researched and inspected regularly to ensure that they follow the strictest health, cleanliness, and safety guidelines. All waiting staff will wear face masks and gloves and self-service buffets will be avoided in favour of à la carte dining, waiter-served meals, or waiter-assisted buffets. Hand sanitiser will be provided to the group before and after every food and beverage service.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from corporate hotels to rustic 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 Australia and Costa Rica. All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities and air conditioning or overhead fans. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort. Rest assured 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.

Souvenirs

There are plenty of interesting bits and pieces to buy as souvenirs in Costa Rica, such as local 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 8 travellers or more, there will usually be no more than 18 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 Latin America. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognise that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour, we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Packing list and Climate

On this tour, you will be travelling through various regions of Costa Rica with quite diverse climates especially whilst in the cloud forests of Arenal and the tropical climate on the coast in Manuel Antonio. It is recommended to bring lots of layers including the following: T Shirts made of breathable materials, hiking trousers, a fleece jacket for colder parts and the evenings, a jumper and a waterproof Jacket as shell layer or a

light rain jacket. The climate in most areas is tropical, humid and warm therefore we recommend wearing light-weight breathable clothing. A small backpack that fits into your main hand luggage to carry your daily essentials should also be brought.

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each, a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

Exchanging Cash

The unit of currency in Costa Rica is the Costa Rican Colon (CRC). US Dollars are accepted virtually everywhere in Costa Rica however you will receive the change in CRC. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Try and keep some small notes and coins on you, as on street stalls and in small shops they may not have the change to break up a high denomination note. If you decide to use US dollars, make sure they are in a good state (not ripped etc) or they will not be accepted. ATMs are common across Latin America and we recommend using an ATM inside a bank where possible. Most major credit cards are widely accepted across the continent, though please bear in mind the charges of your provider. Debit cards are also widely accepted but may have a limit to the amount of cash you can withdraw so consult your bank about this before travelling.

Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AU\$250 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide

Vaccinations and Your Health

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

Before you leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.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.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive an email with your confirmation invoice, along with a link to our website where you can find your visa information (if applicable) and other important information. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

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