

**G**ear up your camera because there's few better places to capture than Costa Rica, with it's so very un-Canadian wildlife, rainforests and glorious birds. Take this Inside Scoop as a helpful companion.

**travel:** delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

#### Before Coming Home

Do room sweeps for belongings. Before buying wood items, ensure there's no worm holes: if there is, your item will be confiscated at customs. Don't buy or accept anything suspect or that may be taken from you at customs: plants, meat/animal products, drugs or endangered species parts. Know your limits and exemptions, [www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html) such as on duty free alcohol and tobacco.

#### Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:

- airport information/transfers
- hiring local travel services
- maps & customs information
- combining adventure travel.

**LeGrow's Travel**  
We Know Travel Best.™

A Maritime Travel Company

# LeGrow's Travel

## Inside Scoop: **COSTA RICA**

**Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey**

**A**lthough serious travellers have been going for decades on such excursions as eco-tours, Costa Rica has become one of the top destinations, which means tons of selection and new services. While there's lots to discover, plan ahead for benefits such as seat selection and discounts. Some key tips:

- Be realistic: we know you want value for money in balancing choices and amenities with your budget. No matter what, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only for such upgrades as room type (oceanfront) there is usually a fee.
- Have a valid passport [www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp).
- Be aware of roaming charges on your cell phone. Internet access is available; use a service such as Skype to call home.
- Electrical service is 110V, with standard two-prong plugs, you won't need adaptors.
- Banks change money and accept Canadian bank cards/travellers cheques (you'll need your passport). ATMs are common. US dollars are often accepted. Local currency is the Colon; change money before going to smaller areas and use cash.
- Most hotels provide hair dryers so save that space for souvenirs.
- If you smoke—cigarettes/tobacco products—be aware there is strict no smoking legislation. There are few public smoking areas; no smoking in recreation areas, restaurants, parks, etc. Dispose butts properly.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

#### Don't Leave Without It

Although healthcare is terrific it is expensive. We strongly recommend LeGrow's Travel medical and cancellation/interruption insurance to cover unanticipated issues.

#### Pack Strategically

The world is overrun with black bags so put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. In your carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery and as all medicine must be declared, bring prescription drugs in original containers or a doctor's letter.

Items long distance travellers pack in carry-on: pen/notebook, battery alarm clock, disinfectant hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg), a change of underclothes and shirt.

Pack most liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size is 100ml(3.4oz). All must fit in a clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre (often available before airport screening), then place it in the tray. You may take baby formula, food or milk for a child under 2 years old (0-24 months).

Permitted in carry-on: laptops, cell phones, disposable razors, umbrellas, canes and nail clippers. Items you can't take on include knives, corkscrews and sports gear such as golf clubs, baseball bats and pool cues.

Check with your airline and [www.catsa.gc.ca/home](http://www.catsa.gc.ca/home) for restrictions; the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority controls security; extra measures now mean allowing more time. Costa Rica covers 0.03% of the globe's surface but has 6% of the world's biodiversity. More than 25% of the country forms its conservation system and protected territories. If you see a blue flag with stars, it means that beach is part of the **Blue Flag Ecological Program** for water quality and low beach pollution.

**Tip:** the official language is Spanish. Take LeGrow's Travel's Inside Scoop: Spanish. If you try to speak it, "Ticos" (Costa Ricans) will go out of their way to help you.

#### Travel Safe

You can rent a car with a Canadian driver's license. Lock doors and keep windows up, stash gear where it can't be seen (never leave cash, passports or credit cards in a car). If you travel away from your hotel, take a copy or cell photo of your passport; leave the original and valuables in the room safe. Hire a taxi at night; taxis that comply legally have a yellow triangle on doors.

## Your Airline

Sign up online for your airline's email or text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed (the plane might be flying in). CATSA notes "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s).**" Airline staff are on duty some 3hrs prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. **For check-in or carry-on baggage allowances and restrictions,** see your airline's website. Size/weight restrictions for checked and carry-on varies: check with your airline. **Entry & Departure:** All visitors must have an entry/exit ticket: ask your counsellor.



## Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips

at [www.legrowstravel.ca/inside-scoops](http://www.legrowstravel.ca/inside-scoops)

- ☐ Your sense of adventure & humour!

## Don't Forget Your Swimsuit...

...or insect repellent or high SPF sunscreen. With strong riptides and currents, watch for signs such as no other swimmers, water colour changes, turbulence and red flags on beaches with lifeguards.

- To visit a rainforest, take a rain coat/hood, use hiking boots (not sandals) and insect repellent.
- The nice weather is year round (even if rainy).
- With the focus on outdoor adventures and sustainable tourism, an ideal spot is **Monteverde's** "zoofarms" with 40 species of snakes, butterflies and frogs/**Children's Eternal Forest.**



## Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!

**Canadians:** Emergency? The Canadian consulate in San José is at Sabana Sur, behind Contraloría, Oficentro Ejecutivo La Sabana, Building 5, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, 506-2242-4400, [sjcra@international.gc.ca](mailto:sjcra@international.gc.ca), [www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa\\_rica/index.aspx](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa_rica/index.aspx). Or contact Global Affairs (collect if needed) 613-996-8885, [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca).

## So Much To Do, So Little Time

Although you can rappel down a waterfall, zipline through a jungle and surf righteous waves in Tamarindo, there are lots of ways to relax. Rainforests and cloud forests are teeming with wildlife and lush vegetation, the country's relatively small size meaning adventures are close and in ideal settings. With seven provinces and microclimates, the country is home to volcanoes, spectacular waterfalls and gorgeous views. Pick your top priorities and go from there.

- Visitors rate "canopy tours" as the best experience. Numerous companies offer variations; you can go above and in the forest (ask your counsellor). A "canopy" tour rules, its high-altitude ecosystem home to jungle plant and animals; look down on a forest or go through on a zipline. Look for howler monkeys!
- With 20 natural parks, eight biological reserves and 762 miles of coastline on the Pacific and Caribbean, activities include horseback riding, hiking, beachcombing and bird-watching.
- The east coast's active **Arenal Volcano** is an unusual spot to zipline (and hanging bridges) since you zip by gaseous steam and molten lava (an ideal place to let loose with screams). This volcano is beautiful at night. Costa Rica has six active volcanoes (61 dormant), some vouching for **Irazú, Turrialba, La Fortuna** and **Poás Volcano National Park**. If you visit **Tenorio Volcano National Park**, hike to the spectacular **Rio Celeste Waterfall**.
- At **Manuel Antonio National Park**, see fantastic beaches and monkeys. Colourful scarlett macaws, bright green parakeets and hummingbirds live in **Carara National Park**, approximately an hour from San José (the main city and site of one of the two international airports in Costa Rica).
- **Corcovado National Park** is one of the best places to see animals. Whitewater raft on Pacuare, Reventazon, Corobici, Sarapiquí, Naranjo or Savegre rivers. See turtles at **Tortuguero National Park** (Caribbean) or **Las Baulas National Park** (Pacific).
- The **Moro Castle** in **Barrio Amón** is considered the best example of Mudejar architecture.
- Although there's a rainy season, many consider it one of the best times to go as fewer people visit and the rainfall makes the country quite lush.

For a relaxing visit, hike through the tropical rainforest in **La Paz** with waterfalls and unmatched views—after all that exercise, partake in "Everything Bio" with organic food or settle in at a spa for massages with volcanic mud, yoga and detoxifying baths.

## Cities More Your Style?

Smaller cities might suit: **Jaco** a party beach town; **Tamarindo** with shops and restaurants, both areas offering several tours. **San José** is the main city, hosting more than half the country's business and services (downtown is almost uninhabited by residents) with a rich history and modernization. The Main Plaza became **Central Park**, the "New Plaza" the city's marketplace. The **Barrio Amón Walkway** is a protected zone and barrio with architectural history and beautiful homes, some converted into hotels or restaurants.

The **Museum of Contemporary Art and Design** is in the National Liquor Factory's old rum warehouse with exhibition rooms displaying permanent and seasonal collections including Central American archives. The lower level of the National Social Security Institute's **Jade Museum** displays the largest collection of the Americas Pre-Colombian Jade.

The **Costa Rican Center of Science and Culture** is the children's museum (originally the central penitentiary!) and first interactive museum in Central America. Tour next door's **National Art Gallery**.

**The Costa Rican Art Museum** holds approximately 6,400 sculptures, largely from national artists. **La Salle Natural Science Museum**, in the Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock building, La Sabana south, displays more than 70,000 paleontology, geology, mollusk and invertebrate samples.

For maps and information, see [www.visitcostarica.com](http://www.visitcostarica.com).

## Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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