

San Jose & Pacific Coast, Costa Rica



San Jose is the most cosmopolitan capital in Central America. The city is packed with shopping, dining, and entertainment opportunities and the downtown area is the historic and vibrant center of the city. For a nice escape from the hustle and bustle, you can stroll along the several blocks of Avenidas Central and 4 and Calles 2 and 17, which have been turned into pedestrian malls.

You can also combine your visit to San Jose with a stay in either the beach area of Guanacaste along the Pacific Coast or the mountainous Arenal Volcano/Monteverde area-or you can combine all 3 areas for a great Costa Rican adventure. If you'd like to visit 2 or 3 areas, contact a reservation agent for more information.

Package Includes:

- Choice of accommodations
- Hotel taxes
- Assistance of a local destination representative

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should go?

Families

Trek through a national park or visit a volcano.

Adventurers

Explore the rain forest, take a mountain hike, go kayaking, or propel through the rainforest.

What's the climate like?

	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn
Average High	73° F	72° F	78° F	77° F
Average Low	59° F	60° F	62° F	60° F
Average Rainfall	0.4"	0.5"	11.3"	13.1"

Costa Rica's year-round average temperature is 76°F. Rainy season is June – October.

How do I get around town?

Transfers

Transfers are not included, but are available for purchase from us between the airport and all hotels (except those in the Arenal/Monteverde area where a rental car is recommended).

Car

A rental car is a great way to see the countryside and explore on your own, if you aren't taking any tours. However, keep in mind that roads outside of San José are in poor condition with potholes, unpaved areas, and sharp turns, which make travel times longer than what you may expect. Due to the terrain and weather, it is best to rent a four-wheel drive vehicle. Make sure to check with your car insurance company about coverage in Costa Rica. Always park your car in a parking lot, not on the street, and don't leave any valuables in your car at any time. Do your driving in daylight hours (before 6pm), as it is much easier to navigate.

Taxi

A taxi is a great method of transportation for getting around in San José if you didn't rent a car. Make sure to only take metered taxis and/or agree on the price before you get in. Your hotel can help you determine what the taxi fare should be to your intended destination.

Bus

Bus travel is not recommended.

Where should I go shopping?

Costa Rica has yet to evolve into a shopping destination. For souvenirs, the shops in your hotel are the best bet, along with stores in Tamarindo. Things to look for are coffee, woodcarvings, wood salad bowls and platters, ceramics from central Guanacaste, wonderful reproductions of pre-Columbian jewelry, and crafts from Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

Beside coffee, you can also purchase a coffee-creme liqueur called Café Rica; a line of salsas from Tipica Tropical Sauce; and a unique condiment, Salsa Lizano, that Costa Ricans use as steak sauce.

When are the local events?

Many of Costa Rica's holidays and celebrations revolve around the church. Here are some happenings throughout the year:

Fiestas of Santa Cruz

Mid-January. A religious celebration honoring the Black Christ of Esquipulas with dancing, music, and bullfights. Guanacaste.

Holy Week

Week before Easter. Religious processions are held in towns throughout the country.

Independence Day

September 15. Celebrations everywhere, some with nighttime parades with children.

All Soul's Day

November 2. Not as elaborate as Mexico's celebration, Costa Ricans take time this day to remember the deceased.

Las Posadas

December 15. Children and carolers go door to door seeking lodging in a reenactment of when Joseph and Mary did the same.

Travel tidbits

Alcohol

No alcohol is served the two days before Easter and the two days before and after a presidential election.

Upon Arrival

Brace yourself for long lines at immigration if you arrive in the evening along with all the other large flights from North America. Try to get a seat near the front of the plane and don't dawdle when disembarking.

Clothing

You wouldn't think of it, going to the tropics, but if planning to go to Monteverde Cloud Forest, it's advised to bring a jacket. The elevation is around 10,000 feet and it can get quite cool.

Cash vs. Travelers Checks

It is advised to bring cash, not travelers checks to Costa Rica. Some large hotels will refuse them or will only give you \$25 cash because the banks often take a month to pay on them. Smaller hotels and merchants won't touch them, so it's really not worth bringing them. Plus, lines at banks to cash them can also be quite long — not something you want to spend your time doing on vacation. Cash or credit cards work best.

Good to Know:

Airport Name: 3-letter Code:	Juan Santamaría International Airport SJO
Best Weather:	November – May
Best Values:	June – October
Currency:	Costa Rican colón or colones (plural)
Language:	Spanish is the official language of Costa Rica, although many people speak English, especially in tourist areas.
Time Zone:	Costa Rica is in the Central Time Zone. Costa Rica does not adapt to Daylight Saving Time, so during that time (April – October) the time is one hour later than Central Time.
Proof of Citizenship:	Government legislation requires all people traveling via air to and from the United States and Canada to have a valid passport. For complete details, visit the travel section of the U.S. Department of State's web site at www.state.gov .
Tipping:	A 10% service charge is usually added to the bill (or included in the prices on the menu). If you aren't sure if it has been added, ask. Additional tipping is not expected, but if the service has been especially good, some people leave a little extra.
Dress:	Very casual in the beach areas; more formal in San José. Dress appropriately if visiting a church.