

Costa Rica Guided Walking Holiday

Tour Style: Worldwide Multi-Centre

Destination: Costa Rica

Trip code: CTWHW

Trip Walking Grade: 2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Discover the astounding beauty and rich wildlife of this stunning tropical paradise. Monkeys look on from the trees of the Caño Negro Wildlife Reserve as you cruise down the peaceful river en route to a canopy trail, where you'll see colourful bird life including the iconic toucan. Hikes in Poás Volcano National Park reveal steaming craters and emerald pools – signs of the enormous geothermal forces which lie below. Encounter another spectacular volcano at Arenal National Park before relaxing on the sandy beaches and quiet trails of Marino Ballena National Park.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 11 nights' accommodation in en-suite rooms
- Full board from dinner on arrival to breakfast on departure
- A full programme of guided walks led by local guides
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- Travel by air-conditioned coach/minivan
- Tips

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Astounding tropical bird life including the rare resplendent quetzal
- Walking around the active Arenal Volcano
- Rainforest canopy walks
- Boat ride through Caño Negro Wildlife Reserve
- Insight from expert walking and naturalist guides
- Optional extension to the Corcovado National Park. Please call 020 3974 8865 for more information.

TRIP SUITABILITY

This holiday offers a mix of sightseeing and there is a daily choice of walks. Easier walks range from 1½ to 3 miles (2 to 5km) on undulating terrain; harder walks are 4-9 miles (7 to 14½km) with up to 4,250 feet (1,291m) of descent.



ITINERARY

Day 1: San José

We transfer from the airport on a c. 20 - minute drive to our accommodation located amongst the coffee fields and at an elevation of 4,185ft. Here we have magnificent views of the Central Valley as well as Poás, Barva and Irazú volcanoes.

Day 2: La Paz Waterfall And Coffee Tour

Today we visit La Paz Waterfall Gardens, a hummingbird observation area as well as a forest trail with spectacular waterfall views. Distance: approx. 1 mile (1½km) with negligible ascent on good terrain. We'll also visit the Cinchona bird feeders and the Doka Estate for a wonderful coffee tour.

Day 3: Arenal And San Carlos Valley

Today we travel northwest to the lush San Carlos lowlands and Arenal. We stop en route in the small town of Sarchí, known for its handicrafts and art, including colourful and distinctive traditional oxcarts. We'll also visit Zarcero, a small town that is pleasantly not overrun by tourists and is home to an intriguing topiary garden and a wonderfully decorated old church.

Set in 30 acres of relaxing gardens, our hotel for the next three nights sits along the San Carlos River where we can see crocodiles, aningas and green iguanas. As in most of Costa Rica, the birdlife is wonderful, and toucans often frequent the surrounding trees. The resort is near Arenal Volcano.

Day 4: Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge And The Río Frío

We'll be doing something a little different today. We take a slow river-boat ride through the 20,000-acre Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge and the Río Frío. Close to the border with Nicaragua, it is one of Costa Rica's best reserves. Along the way we should have a good chance of spotting monkeys, caimans, turtles, sloths and butterflies as well as several bird species. We often spot the Great pPotoo, a highly camouflaged bird that pretends to be part of a branch.

Later this afternoon we have time to relax at the hotel and enjoy the facilities, or explore the local area, including the San Carlos River.

Day 5: San Carlos Lowlands And Arenal

We have several choices for exploring the area around Arenal Volcano today.

Arenal Volcano 1968 Trails: We'll explore here in the morning. Two walks lead us over old lava flows at the base of Arenal Volcano. Distance: 3 miles (5km) with negligible ascent; or a shorter option with more wildlife watching: 1½ miles (2½ km).

Arenal Hanging Bridges: This spectacular trail, which we'll visit in the afternoon, winds through and over the primary rainforest, with a system of bridges and trails allowing you to view up close the wildlife and lush forest canopy and spectacular views of the Arenal Volcano. Distance: 2 miles (3km) with 250 feet (76m) of ascent.

Day 6: To San Gerardo De Dota

As we begin our drive to the mountains we start the day visiting a gold museum in San José, which features excellent displays of pre-Columbian pottery, jade and gold artefacts.

We continue our drive to reach the highlands of Talamanca. We'll enjoy a traditional lunch in the mountains and walk into the valley where our next accommodation is located, an unspoilt location ideal for wildlife viewing, especially birds.

San Gerardo de Dota is one of the finest spots in the country to see the Resplendent Quetzal, a beautifully coloured, iridescent bird that Central American tribes revered as sacred. We may also see Dusky Nightjars, Emerald Toucanets, Acorn Woodpeckers and a great diversity of hummingbirds, such as the Lesser Violetear, White-throated Mountain gem, Talamanca Hummingbird and Scintillant Hummingbird, Costa Rica's smallest species.

Day 7: San Gerardo De Dota

During our time at the lodge, a variety of trails will be offered in the cool mountain surroundings.

Today we have two stunning walk options. We may take an 9 mile (14½km) full day trek, with 4,250 feet

(1,291m) of descent, down the Cerro de la Muerte; alternatively, we can choose a shorter trail – 2 miles (3km) with 700 feet (213m) of descent – of equivalent beauty. There are also several shorter walks around the lodge, which will be offered in the afternoon. Walk along the nearby river to spot the riverbank birdlife, such as American Dipper and the Torrent Tyrannulet, look out for the interesting Flowerpiercer and explore the small nearby village, and learn a little about its history. Distance: 1 mile (1½km) or 3 miles (5km) to also visit a waterfall.

Day 8: To Ballena De Osa

This morning, walk the Providencia Road, which traverses the high elevation of cloud forest of Los Quetzales National Park. This peaceful road affords us a great opportunity to admire the moss-laden forest and look for the famous Resplendent Quetzal. Distance: 3 miles (5km) with 450 feet (131m) of ascent.

After lunch we drive to the highest point on the Pan-American Highway – it sits at well over 10,000 feet above sea level. On a clear day you can see both the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea as we traverse the spine of the continental divide.

Dropping into the San Isidro valley we make our way over the coastal mountains towards the Pacific Ocean and our accommodation. Accommodation: Cristal Ballena Resort, Ballena de Osa (3 nights).

Day 9 - 10: Marino Ballena National Park

The park offers an array of activities and has yet to be discovered by most foreign visitors, and we spend two days here exploring. The vast sandy beach is quite deserted. Tidal pools are home to colourful saltwater fish and Humpback whales court and calve in the sheltered coves offshore.

There is the opportunity to go on an optional mangrove or whale watching tour. The mangrove tour reveals endemic species of birds such as Mangrove Hummingbird and the endangered Yellow-billed Cotinga. The order of activities will depend on tide times and personal interest, and all tours are payable locally, in cash.

A variety of walks will be offered during our time in the park, or you can spend extra time on the beach – there's a great snorkelling spot accessible from here – or take advantage of the amenities at the hotel.

Day 11: To San José

For those not taking the extension, we return to Alajuela, near San José. We'll make several stops along the way including one to spot the jewel-bright Scarlet Macaws.

Day 12: Departure Day

Our adventure has sadly come to an end; we transfer to the airport for our departure flight after breakfast.

ACCOMMODATION

Buena Vista Hotel, San Jose - Costa Rica

The Buena Vista Hotel is situated a little outside San Jose, among coffee fields and enjoys views along the central valley across the capital toward Poas volcano.

Tilajari Resort, Arenal - Costa Rica

A luxurious 4-star country lodge with large well-appointed rooms and a range of facilities including a butterfly garden. A highlight of the resort is the extensive grounds, with a private rainforest reserve in front of the hotel.

Savegre Mountain Lodge, San Gerado De Dota - Costa Rica

The Savegre Mountain Lodge is relatively basic in terms of facilities and amenities, but its great attraction lies in its closeness to nature, and great location surrounded by untouched cloud forest and accompanied by birdsong. Nights can be cool here at 2,000m altitude, but it is a very atmospheric place.

Cristal Ballena Resort - Costa Rica

On the Pacific Coast, this excellent 4-star hotel is set in extensive tropical gardens with splendid views over the ocean and extensive facilities including large rooms with balconies, a swimming pool and spa.

Casa Corcovado - Holiday Extension - Costa Rica

Tucked away in the trees and cooled by the Pacific Ocean, the lodge is a 170 acre private reserve bordering Corcovado National Park. The lodge has been constructed to be in harmony with the landscape. Individual bungalows offering comfort without taking away from the natural surrounding and furnishings are by Costa Rican artisans.

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Weather & Seasonality

Costa Rica experiences two seasons: wet and dry. Departures are planned for the dry season but even then, due to travelling through tropical rainforests, there may be a number of wet days, especially inland. Temperatures depend on place and altitude. San José has an average year round temperature of 22°C / 72°F. The days can be fairly hot but temperatures drop a little at night. The highlands around San Gerado de Dota in particular are cold at night.

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

For those travelling on our HF Holidays' group flight, please proceed to the arrivals hall once you have passed through passport control, customs and baggage reclaim, when you arrive at your destination. Your leader or local leader will assemble the group in the arrivals hall. Look out for the HF Holidays' sign.

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

If you are arriving ahead of the group, and are meeting them at the first hotel, please leave a message at the hotel reception for the HF Holidays' leader or local leader, detailing your room number, and a mobile telephone number if possible. The leader will contact you once the group arrives. If you are arriving after the group, a message will be left for you at the hotel reception, welcoming you and giving details of the time and place to meet the group. If your flight arrives before the group flight and you would like to join the transfer to the first hotel, please contact our Abroad Administration team on (0)20 8732 1261. They will have a list of the relevant transfer costs.

What To Bring

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Essential Equipment

As you'll be carrying your own luggage at airports and between your transport and hotels we recommend you try to keep your luggage to a minimum. These items are a general suggestion of what to pack for an active outdoor and walking holiday; depending on your destination, you may need more of some things and less – or none! – of others. You'll know best what you prefer to wear when out walking or while taking part in other outdoor activities.

- Walking boots (worn in), with good ankle support and spare bootlaces
- Walking socks
- Walking sandals
- Lightweight fleece, waterproof trousers and jacket
- Shorts and short-sleeved t-shirts
- Long trousers and long-sleeved lightcoloured shirts with collars to protect from the sun. Your clothing should ideally be pre-treated with insect repellent and in-built sun protection (available from specialist clothing stores such as Rohan, Cotswold Outdoor).
- Warm fleece, scarf/buff hat and gloves
- Torch
- Comfortable clothes and shoes for evenings and sightseeing
- Sun protection – sun hat, sunglasses, high factor sunscreen and lip protection
- Water bottle – at least 2-litre capacity
- Lightweight survival bag
- Small/medium rucksack (30 litre) and a liner or cover to keep contents dry
- Insect repellent
- Universal travel plug
- Personal first aid kit including: personal medication, tissues, plasters, blister kit, painkillers, antiseptic wipes, Imodium, rehydration sachets

Vaccinations & Health

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see if any health precautions are needed. The following websites provide a wealth of information on travelling and health: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk www.traveldoctor.co.uk

Medical services are not free to visitors and health insurance is therefore a necessity.

Vaccines: Hepatitis A, Typhoid & Tetanus vaccinations are recommended. Diphtheria, malaria and rabies prevention may be recommended too.

Mosquitoes, chiggers and a little biting black fly can present a problem if you are allergic to bites. Ticks are present but no diseases are known to be spread by them. Most people are not bothered at all. A spray repellent with DEET is recommended. Malaria is present in Costa Rica, although more towards the south and Atlantic coast, away from the areas we will visit. We would urge you to consult your GP before you depart for up to date information.

Passports & Visas

Passport

A full passport is required and must be valid for one day beyond the date of departure from Costa Rica.

Visas

British citizens with full right of residence in the UK do not require a visa for Costa Rica. Those who do not have British passports should check requirements with the embassies or consulates of Costa Rica.

Local Currency

The official currency is the Colon. Colones cannot be obtained in the UK, but can be exchanged from US Dollars in Costa Rica. US Dollars are also widely accepted. Travellers cheques are no longer accepted at most banks. Major credit cards are accepted in larger hotels, although you may have problems using them in some of the more rural locations we will visit.

Local Time

GMT/UTC -6 hours, no Daylight Saving

Electricity

110V, North American 3 pin plugs (2 flat & 1 round pin). Power surges and fluctuation occur frequently.

ATM Availability

There are ATM's available

Tipping

Tips are included on this holiday. (but not on the extension to Corcovado)

HOW TO BOOK

When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 7pm Saturday & Sunday: 9am – 1pm Bank Holiday Monday: 9am – 1pm

PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

NON-MEMBER FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying a Non-Member's fee of £10 per person per holiday. Alternatively, full membership is available from £100 – visit hfholidays.co.uk/membership for details.

BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: Svenska Handelsbanken AB (publ) Account Name: HF Holidays Ltd Account Number: 35923304 Sort Code: 40-51-62

IBAN: GB92HAND40516235923304 Swift / Bic Code: HANDGB22

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the Manage My Booking function on our website. Click on the link at the top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

YOUR FINAL BALANCE

The balance is due 10 weeks before departure. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on 01702 427 236 or visit hfholidays.co.uk/insurance

PEACE OF MIND

ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website atol.org.uk

MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

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