

# Wildlife Beach Costa Rica Uncovered



Corcovado National Park – Manuel Antonio - San Gerardo cloudforest - Rincon de la Vieja - Pacific beaches – Arenal Volcano – charming hotels – freedom to travel at your own pace - off the beaten path

Take the road less travelled on this self-drive holiday taking all of Costa Rica's main ecosystems.

Explore a network of peaceful cloudforest trails at San Gerardo.

Enjoy unparalleled wildlife viewing in the lush tropical rainforest of Corcovado

Walk through monkey-filled jungles then swim off the white sand beach of Manuel Antonio.

Visit the volcanoes of Arenal and Rincon de la Vieja.

Relax by the Pacific with beaches fringed by mangrove forests.

This is a Pura *handpicked* holiday with an activity rating of *low* and a comfort rating *first*.



Explore the traditional landscapes of Costa Rica at your own pace



**"Best holiday we have ever had. Corcovado was the most special place we have ever visited - we swam in a waterfall while monkeys played in the trees above - magnificent." You did good. In fact so much better than good. We loved every minute, had a fantastic time, great weather, great food & great hotels! So thank you!" Frances S**

## Holiday Itinerary

**Day 01** | San José | **arrive and relax**

On arrival in San Jose you are met and taken to your hotel, where you stay overnight.

This evening is free to relax after your long flight.

Please note international flights are quoted separately.



Enjoy a warm welcome as you travel off the beaten track

**Day 02** | San Gerardo | **travel to cloudforest**

This morning your 4x4 hire car will be brought to you at the hotel.

A member of our local team will take you through your intended driving route and answer any questions you may have.

You then set off driving independently to San Gerardo de Dota. This takes around one and a half to two hours going at a leisurely pace.

Roads in Costa Rica are a mixture of good tarmac, old tarmac with potholes and compacted dirt roads. The road system is fairly straightforward, although signposts are improving you will need our maps and directions.

The road winds through the lush green hillsides of the Central Valley then climbs up to Cerro de la Muerte, the highest pass in Costa Rica at 3,491m.

Here the air gets cooler and the vegetation changes as you enter the cloudforest region.

Questions? Ready to book? Call us on **01273 676 712**

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A Resplendent Quetzal surveys its surroundings in San Gerardo



Horse riding in the afternoon light at Dominical



Looking out onto the Pacific from the hillsides at Dominical

Spend the next two nights in a lodge at San Gerardo de Dota, in the heart of the cloudforest. (b)

## **Day 03** | San Gerardo | **explore cloudforest**

Today is yours to explore independently.

Compared to the crowded trails at Monteverde, San Gerardo is a peaceful haven, with quiet forest paths meandering beside clear mountain streams.

It is also the most reliable area in Costa Rica to catch a glimpse of the Resplendent Quetzal – quite a treat even for the non-birder.

Other more common sights include humming birds, colourful butterflies, exotic frogs and orchids.

The lodge offers a number of tours, but most of the trails in the area can be self-guided and taken at your own pace. (b)

## **Day 04** | Dominical | **to the south Pacific**

After breakfast set off driving to Dominical on the Pacific coast. This should take around two to three hours.

Follow the highway south then west towards the sea.

The contrast between habitats en route is quite remarkable. The road descends from the cool mists of cloudforest down to the hot and humid tropical jungle, then through banana plantations to the coast.

Your lodge overlooking the sea is good base from which to explore the dramatic coastline and the nearby Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica's last wilderness. (b)

## **Day 05** | Dominical | **wildlife at Corcovado**

Visit the Corcovado National Park with your guide today for fantastic wildlife viewing opportunities.

The park remains largely untouched and harbours an incredible biodiversity, including 140 species of mammals, 367 birds and 177 amphibians and reptiles.

You can expect to see several species of monkey, sloth and a host of birdlife during your guided walk.

More elusive creatures such as jaguar, ocelot, and tapir also make the forest their home. A paw print in the mud is often the closest you will get to a sighting however. (b,l)

## **Day 06** | Dominical | **boat to Caño Island**

Today you have the chance to take a boat a little way off shore to Caño Island.

The island itself, once an Indian burial ground, offers some pretty walks and good snorkeling off the beach.

The biggest draw is the boat journey itself, with pods of dolphin often accompanying you en route. (b)

## **Day 07** | Manuel Antonio | **to the Central Pacific**

As you only have a short way to go today you can afford a leisurely start.

Perhaps take the jungle trail down to Playa Tortuga this morning. The area is home to one of the last strands of coastal rainforest in Central America.

The whole area still maintains a very 'untouched' feel, with empty, sweeping beaches fringed by lush forest.

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A well camouflaged sloth debates his next move



The most common traffic you'll encounter in Rincon de la Vieja



A feisty bull gives a local cowboy a run for his money

When you are ready drive north along the coastal to Manuel Antonio. This should only take an hour.

This evening is free to relax. There are plenty of restaurants to choose from in town, the most conspicuous being the aptly named 'El Avion', housed in a retired army transport plane.

In fact it was one of the planes central to the Iran-contra scandal of the Reagan years. (b)

## Day 08 | Manuel Antonio | **wildlife and beach**

This morning you are met at the hotel by your guide for a half day tour of the national park.

Manuel Antonio National Park is one of the most scenically beautiful places in Costa Rica, with lush tropical jungle bordering pristine white sand beaches.

The path through the forest is well marked. Your guide will know the best places en route to spot monkeys, toucans and sloth.

The path winds steadily uphill, but the climb is worth it when the trees open up at the end of the track to reveal a stunning view across the bay and out to sea.

Afterwards you can relax on the beach or perhaps take a dip. The bay is sheltered so good for swimming. (b)

## Day 09 | Arenal | **watch the lava flows**

After breakfast at the lodge prepare to set off on your journey north towards the Arenal Volcano.

This should take around three hours, going at a leisurely pace.

As you approach the village of La Fortuna you will see the towering form of Arenal volcano rising from the surrounding grassy fields.

The volcano's last major eruption was in 2001, but it continues to spew forth clouds of smoke, ash and lava on an almost daily basis.

As long as you do not venture beyond the permitted areas the volcano is safe to view from a distance.

It is particularly spectacular on a clear night when glowing molten lava trails can be seen snaking down the southwestern side.

Stay for three nights in this area at the only hotel to the south of the volcano for views of the crater. (b)

## Day 10 | Arenal | **explore the area**

Wake up early for the best chance to see the top of the volcano before clouds obscure the top.

You are in an absolutely stunning setting, and even if the volcano is hidden from sight there are hot springs where you can relax within earshot.

Active excursions are on offer, one of the best being the Hanging Bridges – a series of interconnecting pathways and suspended bridges through the forest canopy with stunning views onto the valley below.

As you have the hire car you are free to structure the day as you wish.

Take advantage of an included morning guided tour of the surrounding forest to find some of the nearly 400 species of birds which have been spotted in this area. The National Park is nearby with some good trails to explore in the shadow of the volcano. (b)

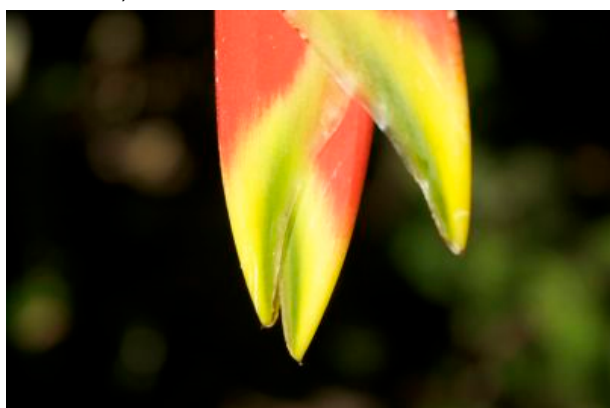
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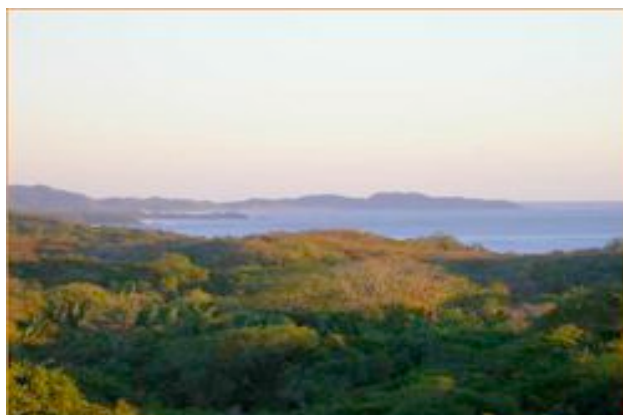
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The view from your hotel at Arenal



The Heliconia, national flower of Costa Rica



The view from your hotel towards the ocean



Turtles on the beach near Ostional

## Day 11 | Arenal | explore the area

Your hotel offers a very comprehensive and reasonable range of excursions in the area.

The Cerro Chato hike is worth considering as would be the canoe trip either on Lake Arenal (actually a reservoir) or on the wildlife rich Penas Blancas River. (b)

## Day 12 | Rincon | tropical dry forest

Take the long road north this morning to Rincon de la Vieja, Costa Rica's cattle ranching territory.

The sun-bleached landscape of the tropical dry forest is yet another contrast to those you have already visited.

One of the few regions that still feels typically 'Costa Rican', Rincon de la Vieja is a real hidden gem.

As you leave Liberia and travel further into the Guanacaste province, buildings and tarmac give way to rolling hillsides covered by gnarled woodland.

You will very likely have to pause along the dusty road leading to your lodge as you wait for a solitary cow to amble across to the next field.

Your base for the next two nights is a hacienda and working cattle ranch on the edge of the national park.

You may want to take a dip in the small but welcoming swimming pool to cool off after your journey. (b)

## Day 13 | Rincon | mud pots and fumaroles

The towering dome of Rincon de la Vieja volcano dominates the surrounding landscape.

As you make your way through the park its presence can be felt in the bubbling mud pots, fumaroles and sulphurous vents that line the route.

These natural phenomena are quite a sight, even if the smell is rather less than appealing.

Despite the wizened trees and dry leaves underfoot this is still a surprisingly green region, with clear babbling streams winding through the landscape. (b)

## Day 14 | Ostional | travel to Pacific beach

This morning set off driving southwest to the Pacific coastline of the Nicoya Peninsula.

As you leave the main road at Nicoya you may find the number of potholes increasing, but the traffic will be lighter.

Arrive in the sleepy beach town of Nosara, where the sweeping sands are fringed by tropical forest. Continue up the hills above Ostional beach and your lovely hotel on a bluff overlooking the coastline of Nosara and Samara stretching away in front of you. (b)

## Day 15 | Ostional | walk in coastal forest

Free day to relax or explore.

You could take a walk along the forest pathways near Playa Nosara, which lies on a delta where the Rio Nosara and Rio Montana meet.

The sand here is black and backed by mangrove forest, home to over 100 species of bird and several species of monkey. Tours through the forest by boat or canoe are available locally. (b)

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*The last rays of daylight over the beach near your hotel*

## **Day 16** | Ostional | **relax at the beach**

Another free day to relax.

Along with Playa Nosara, there are several other lovely beaches in the area.

The prettiest and smallest of these is Playa Pelada, which is popular with surfers. It also has a bat cave if you want to do some exploring.

The white sands of nearby Playa Guiones are edged by low dunes and tropical forest. (b)

## **Day 17** | Ostional | **relax at the beach**

Between July and November the nearby Ostional Wildlife Refuge sees the arrival of the Olive Ridley turtle, which nest on the beach here.

The refuge itself covers over 350ha of land and a marine zone of 8,000ha and is one of the most important nesting sites for olive ridleys in the world.(b)

## **Day 18** | flight | **fly home**

Ideally you will fly into San José but leave from Liberia. This being the case, drive the short distance to the airport in plenty of time to drop-off your hire car and check-in for your flight home.

If you are flying home from San José you may need a night in the city prior to your departure. (b)

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## Holiday Information

### Pura Handpicked

We have designed it to showcase what we believe to be the best parts of Costa Rica. While the places included may not be the most well known, they are for us the hidden gems, away from the well-trodden tourist trail.

We deliver this holiday using our carefully selected local suppliers. Like us they are passionate about the places we visit and about helping you experience a real slice of Costa Rican life.

We have chosen the hotels and lodges very carefully. They best reflect the places you are visiting whilst still being clean, comfortable and well run.

### When should I go?

Costa Rica has two seasons: rainy and dry. The dry season runs from December to May.

Costa Rica is a tropical country with temperatures generally ranging from 25°C - 35°C year round.

The only time of year to really avoid are September, October and the first part of November as the rains can be very heavy and persistent.

In the transitional month of May you may find stormy weather on the Pacific side of the country in particular.

The general rule is the further north you are, the drier it will be. So, if you plan to travel on the cusp of the seasons you can expect the best weather in the northwest and on the north Pacific coast.

The rainy season is a good time to travel to avoid the crowds. Rains usually last only a couple of hours and do not cause any problems for visitors.

You can expect some showers throughout the year in the rainforest at Dominical and on the Osa Peninsula.

The cloudforest region of San Gerardo is at altitude, so can feel cold and damp throughout the year.

### How active?

Since you have your own car for most of this holiday, you can set your own pace.

The walking tours are of a moderate length and not strenuous. In most areas the going underfoot is good, although some jungle paths may be quite muddy.

Otherwise, you can choose from a variety of excursions from the very active (surfing, horse riding, mountain biking, hiking) to the less active – wildlife walks, scenic drives and of course, just relaxing on a beach.

### How comfortable?

This holiday is tailor made to suit you so we can select the hotels and lodges to fit your needs and budget.

This proposed itinerary has been based on staying in a series of small, friendly 3\* properties that have been chosen for their excellent service and charming style.

### Sample hotels:

*San José, Hotel Bougainvillea*

*San Gerardo, Trogon Lodge*

*Dominical, Villas Gaia*

*Manuel Antonio, Villas Liria*

*Arenal, Observatory Lodge*

*Rincon de la Vieja, Canon de la Vieja*

*Ostional, Luna Azul*

### How independent?

Three guided tours (Corcovado National Park, Cano Island and Manuel Antonio). All tours are shared i.e. group tours. Manuel Antonio is a half day tour, Corcovado and Cano Island are full day trips.

Otherwise you are free to explore at your own pace.

As well as back up on the ground if you need it, we provide maps and local information to help you make the most of your time.

### Not based in the UK?

We are very happy to discuss your requirements if you are not travelling to and from the UK. Please call us on **+44 1273 676712** between 9am and 6.30pm weekdays.

### How do I book?

As a tailor made holiday we need to check availability and prices before taking your booking. If you would like us to prepare you a detailed proposal then simply email [info@pura-aventura.com](mailto:info@pura-aventura.com) or call 01273 676 712 with your preferred dates plus any other changes you would like us to make.

Once you have the proposal and decide you would like to go ahead then please call in with the following:

- Full names
- Address
- Contact telephone numbers & email
- Deposit of 15%

Deposits can be paid by card, cheque or bank transfer, whichever suits you best (the balance of your holiday is due 60 days prior to travel).

We send you a confirmation email detailing all of the services agreed between us. We ask you to check through all of this carefully and sign off on the holiday.

### Prices & Departures

<b>2012</b>	<b>Daily, December to August  </b> <b>£1,790pp guide price</b> Call us now for a confirmed quote.
Flights	<i>Transatlantic flights are quoted separately. You can book these direct or through us.</i> Other than at peak times, expect to pay between £600 and £800 per person.
Prices include	Accommodation in 3* hotels & lodges (twin/double) as per itinerary; 4x4 car hire for one driver with unlimited mileage; Two full-day and one half-day guided tours including entrance fees; Breakfasts throughout; transfers and local information.
Not included	Flights; personal expenses; tips.

Prices are per person, based on two sharing.  
Prices may be subject to change: please confirm at booking.

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