

# **COSTA RICAN JURASSIC EXPERIENCE**

## **Day 1: Arrive in Costa Rica**

Your first night in a boutique hotel with spectacular views, giant hardwood trees nestling the pool and Jacuzzi area outside your bedroom. The perfect start for your Costa Rica vacation.

Your plane arrives in San José today, and we'll quickly whisk you away from town heading first to the coffee communities outside the city. If your flight is early enough so you'll have a chance to hike down to the bottom of the 200 foot waterfall which borders your hotel. The gardens here are used by the public schools in this area to teach sustainable organic processes.

## **Day 2: Hike the cloud forest**

Your guide arrives at breakfast and the adventures begin with about 2 hours of driving -- mainly uphill, to the cloud forest.

Cloud forests are isolated peaks between 5,500 and 7,500 feet of altitude, sticking above surrounding lower rain forest. Monteverde, one of the oldest and most developed cloud forest preserve. It's a place of meditation and silent observation. Cloud forest, lush green, misty, pre-Jurassic plants, waterfalls.

Because each cloud forest is an "island" the flora and fauna develop slightly distinct variations (think of isolation, as in the Galapagos, where even finch species vary between islands separated by less than 20 miles). The lodge is a safe haven for some of the mammals and birds, so sitting at breakfast may be one of the places you'll see wired creatures.

The real glory of the cloud forest is the flora. We'll hike through some bizarre forests which exist only in the clouds in the mountains of Central and South America and southeast Asia (and the mists of the gorilla country in Africa). The type of plant life here is pre Jurassic - house plants in offices in the USA grow taller than giant oak trees. Bromeliads cover branches in thick foliage - a classic symbiotic relationship. The cloud forest has the appearance of being the Missing Link between the Jurassic and modern plant kingdoms.

## **Day 3: The Real Canopy Experience - lunch in the treetops**

Birding from a platform 110 feet above the jungle floor, overlooking the tree tops and down into the canopy.

Abraham is over 400 years old, the patriarch of this ancient primary forest. The observation platform suspends from the lowest majestic branches, 110 feet above the jungle floor. The surrounding primary forest is one of few remaining flat terrain forests in this rich agriculture country. This forest is safe haven for monkeys, forest birds, lizards and mammals (we often see paw prints of big cats). Most important, sitting comfortably in Abraham's platform is gaining a sense of what birds experience -- see nature from their viewpoint, feel the breeze at treetop, hear the jungle noises with no interference from mechanical -- watching nature as only birds can enjoy it.

From this tall platform you watch animals, hear sounds and enjoy the sensation of being a bird for one day. Before sunset we'll head up to the majestic Arenal volcano and to finish the night we will soak in a gorgeous favorite hot springs.

#### **Day 4: Watch monkeys, birds, and lizards from our (silly!) little boats**

Silence is the key to seeing the natural state of animals. Lunch while reclining and watching Mother Nature's show.

This tranquil river is filled with birds and iguanas, monkeys and caiman. It is a naturalist's paradise. We usually have nature to ourselves until we approach the public docks near the end of the river voyage. We can paddle, or, using the absolutely silent electric motors we will move stealth-like, silently skimming under the overhanging branches where so many species build nests. Because we are such a small and cohesive team, and can maintain complete silence, we can really get close to birds, monkeys, sloths, even the caymans.

Solitude, and smoothness of the motor, allows you to sketch your experience with watercolors. This river voyage is through one of Costa Rica's most biologically intense areas. But because of nearby farming, the animals and birds concentrate on the banks of this river, making it much easier to spot creatures.

#### **Day 5: To the beach**

Getting from the northern area to the beach is a treat in itself. We're hiking at a geologically fascinating river - and swimming in the waterfall. The route may not take less time, but it is definitely easy to stop and spot "the locals" -- from hawks and sloths near the roadside to play in small waterfalls or buy local fresh fruits and cheese. The whole idea is to "discover something amazing while you are looking for something else".

#### **Day 6: On the beach**

Sea turtle hatchlings, ready to leave the nest.

We have the day for beach fun, from collecting sea shells to bird watching. When it is not turtle season we can explore the estuaries in sit-on-top sea kayaks, paddling quietly under the canopy, checking the river banks for nests.

With huge luck we may see the arribada - the massive turtle arrival that occurs (unpredictably) in the north central Pacific beaches between August and November.

Sea turtles are only one of nature's attractions at our favorite isolated beaches. Most of the beaches are empty, as protected beaches have restrictions both on construction and access. Beach combing is a favorite pastime, and exploring trails for wildlife is always an option.

And sunsets. Ocean sunsets in the tropics have special colors of reds and oranges and pinks - in Costa Rica we call these "celaje evenings"

#### **Day 7: Back to San José, stopping for shopping**

This is your final morning on the coast.

Even the best of times comes to an end sooner or later. We'll head back to the Central Valley today. If you'd like we can stop for some of the local crafts. Say goodbye and start planning your next Adventure.

**Day 8: On your way back to "civilization"?**