

## **COSTA RICAN RAINFOREST, VOLCANOS and BEACHES**

### **DAY 1 - Fly from USA, Europe or Australia to San Jose, Costa Rica**

This morning you're off to your tropical paradise! For your reference, the flight is about 5 hours from New York. Upon arrival at Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO), we will be waiting for you for transfers to your hotel near San Jose City where you will stay on the first and last nights of your tour.

This evening there will be an orientation briefing by your tour manager. Be sure to ask for the definition of PURA VIDA! Welcome dinner and overnight in San Jose.

### **DAY 2 - Scenic Drive to San Ramon, Visiting en route the Artisan's Town of Sarchi**

This morning you'll enjoy a leisurely breakfast and a lesson on useful Spanish expressions. (But luckily, most local residents are far better at English than we are with Spanish!)

Next, you'll visit the city of San Jose - the capital of Costa Rica. Enjoy a drive through the beautiful Sabana Park, passing by the upscale Rohmoser residential area and Paseo Colon.

You will visit the heart of the city to admire the National Theatre, designed as the opera house in 1897. Afterwards, you'll visit the National Museum, a faithful witness to Costa Rican history, passing by the Supreme Court of Justice, Central Park, the Cathedral and the Congress Building.

En route, we'll stop at the town of Sarchi, "cradle of Costa Rican handicrafts." Here you'll enjoy a delicious typical lunch before continuing to Los Angeles Cloud Forest in the mountain community of San Ramon. Known for generations as the "City of the Poets," San Ramon features a temperate climate and rich soil that has yielded generations of family-run coffee, sugar cane, and dairy farms.

When we say "cloud mountain" or "cloud forest" - the clouds literally meet the mountain as they breeze through the terrain, offering a visually dramatic experience. Your hotel, nestles atop such a mountain. With the feeling of an Adirondack lodge, the property used to be owned by the President of Costa Rica until Jim recently.

### **DAY 3 - Scenic Drive to the Arenal Volcano · Skywalk the Arenal Rainforest · Relax in Thermal Baths · Overnight in San Ramon**

After breakfast, a scenic drive northwest through beautiful rolling farmlands. You're bound for La Fortuna, home of the iconic Arenal Volcano, rising one mile above sea level overlooking Lake Arenal. You'll ascend to the top of the Arenal Rainforest Reserve by cable car. Take in the beautiful vistas of the forest, lake and volcano. Then do the "Sky Walk," featuring a two mile trail system through primary rainforest, including five suspension bridges, two observation points and two waterfalls.

Note: The tour is for all ages and the trail is in fine condition. But it's a "hiking tour" and visitors need to be capable of walking about three hours and through slight elevation changes. If you feel this may be too challenging for you, you could stay at the main building area where there is a little restaurant and quaint souvenir shop. ARE YOU REALLY ADVENTUROUS? Instead of doing the Skywalk, try Sky Trek - a Zip Line in 8 sections for a total length of 1.7 miles, and up to 660 feet above the treetops!

Have your swimsuit handy! This afternoon, slip into the "termales" hot-water thermal pools with temperatures ranging between 98° - 107° degrees. Nature's own hot-tub! After your time at the hot springs, you will return to your hotel tucked in the cloud forest.

### **DAY 4 - Lecture on the Exotic Life Forms of Costa Rica · Cloud Forest Nature Walk · Leisure Afternoon**

This morning you'll enjoy a lecture by the resident ecosystem biologist followed by a guided nature walk in a Cloud Forest at 3,000 feet above sea level. You'll witness insects that perfectly resemble twigs and leaves, along with other fascinating specimens.

This afternoon, you'll learn how Costa Rica leads the world in "sustainable tourism" - preserving the amazing bounty of exotic life forms. In a word, it's PARADISE!

### **DAY 5 - Wednesday - Head to Manuel Antonio and the El Parador Hotel · Traditional Tamale Cooking Class**

Bidding farewell to our home in the mountains, we descend toward the warm, drier air of the Pacific coastline and head southeast toward the Manuel Antonio National Park area. You'll stop at a private ranch to learn how to make the authentic Latin American treat - the Tamale.

Traditionally, making tamales is an all-day affair. That's why Costa Rican families reserve them for special occasions such as Christmas.

After your hard work, enjoy a tamale feast before continuing to your hotel where you will stay the next three nights. The rest of the afternoon is yours to enjoy the pools and magnificent Pacific Coast sunset.

Note: The hotel offers a free regular shuttle service to and from Manuel Antonio National Park.

### **DAY 6 - Thursday - Guided Visit to Manuel Antonio National Park · Afternoon at Leisure or for Optional Activities**

After an early breakfast, we'll visit Manuel Antonio National Park which was established in 1972 when the people of Costa Rica decided to preserve, for future generations, one of the most beautiful and bio-diverse areas of the planet.

Although it's the country's smallest national park, the stunning beauty and diversity of wildlife in its 1700 acres is unequalled, featuring a charming combination of rain forest, beaches and coral reefs. The coastal forest is home for sloths, iguanas, the rare and adorable squirrel monkeys and colorful little crabs. Afternoon at leisure. This evening we'll go out for a great local dinner.

Note: The Manuel Antonio tour is optional and for all ages and the trail is in fine condition. But it's a "hiking tour" and visitors need to be capable of walking for about three hours and through slight elevation changes.

### **DAY 7 - Journey Back to San Jose · Farewell Dinner and Local Dancing Show**

After a leisurely breakfast, head back to the Central Valley.

This evening, dine in a rustic casona (country house), offering a panoramic view of the Central Valley. Tonight's menu includes meat specialties, along with traditional Costa Rican dishes of enyucados, picadillos, refried beans and tortillas. Now here's a chance to show off your dancing skills and enjoy a typical dancing show!

Costa Rica is a peaceful nation, living in harmony with lavish natural beauty. And now you should know why the national slogan is PURA VIDA!

### **DAY 8 - Morning at Leisure · Flight Back Home**

Morning at leisure. Take a private transfer back to Juan Santamaria Airport (SJO) to catch your flight home.