



## Colours of Costa Rica

Worldwide Tour | 16 Days | Moderate

Tortuguero – Sarapiquí – Arenal – Monteverde – Manuel Antonio – San Jose

One of the planet's most biodiverse destinations and a poster child for eco-tourism, Costa Rica is a colourful, peaceful and bountiful country. From the tropical beaches to lush rainforest, you will explore this natural paradise, spending time in beautiful national parks, viewing volcanoes and meeting the friendly local people.

- Discover the jungle and waterways of Tortuguero
- Stand in the shadow of Arenal Volcano
- Trail the elusive quetzal in Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve
- Bathe off the Pacific beaches of Manuel Antonio
- Fly through the canopy on the Rainforest Aerial Tram



### Colours of Costa Rica tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- Touring with guides and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

*The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.*

### Worldwide Tours:

With these worldwide tours you can expect exactly the same Wendy Wu Tours experience. You'll get to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Costa Rica on an excellent value group tour, whilst also getting to travel with like-minded people. This tour includes all meals, so you'll get to taste a range of delicious local foods at handpicked local restaurants or your hotel. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort throughout, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

### Moderate Tours:

'Colours of Costa Rica' is a **moderate** tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- There is a lot of walking on this tour, particularly through national parks and rainforest. Whilst walkways as well maintained you will spend a lot of time on your feet, and there will be some walking on an incline
- You will be required, on several occasions, to climb on and off boats without assistance.

Of course, our National Escort will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

## Itinerary – Colours of Costa Rica

### Day 1: San José

Fly to San José, Costa Rica's capital and travel to Santa Ana, a transfer of about 30 minutes. Depending on your time of arrival the rest of the day is yours to start soaking up the local culture.

#### Destination Information

**Santa Ana** – A city just outside of San José, Santa Ana has the feel of a typical Costa Rican town whilst also being an alluring and fashionable place to be. There are plenty of shops and nice restaurants on its pleasant streets and lots of market stalls of local produce and local arts and crafts to admire.

### Day 2: Santa Ana

This morning, head out of the city to explore Poás Volcano National Park. Located just 1 hour and 30 minutes from San José, the area is home to the 2,700 metre Poás Volcano. Wander the well-kept trails that encircle Poás' two craters, passing through luxuriant cloud forest and admiring the steaming blue pool that has settled in one of the enormous depressions. Return to Santa Ana via the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, a 70-acre natural paradise. Two miles of trails wend their way through native flora in forests, gardens and five waterfalls – keep your eye out for a multitude of fascinating wildlife.



#### Destination Information

**Poás Volcano National Park** – Centred around the 2,700 metre Poás Volcano, one of Costa Rica's largest and most active, this national park offers a range of different habitats to explore. Well-developed, the paths of the park are paved right the way up to the crater rim, where you can look down on a sulfuric pool that bubbles and steams, and watch geysers explode high into the air. There is also plenty of wildlife to spot – 79 species of bird and small mammals such as marmots and coyotes, amongst the lush rainforest.

**La Paz Waterfall Gardens** – Just one hour outside of San José, here you can walk two miles of forested trails that lead to five spectacular waterfalls. La Paz also gives you the opportunity to learn about Costa Rica's flora and fauna in the butterfly observatory, hummingbird garden and orchid garden.

### Day 3: Tortuguero

Transfer from San José to the dock in La Pavona (approx. three hours) and take a boat to Tortuguero, which can take up to two hours. You will need to climb on and off the boat directly onto a river beach with your bags. Only accessible by boat or plane, Tortuguero exudes a relaxed Afro-Caribbean vibe and is famous for Green Turtles that nest here - Tortuguero even means 'turtle catcher'. Spend the afternoon in the village, with the jungle and waterways on one side and on the other, blissful Caribbean beach.



#### Destination Information

**Tortuguero** – Located on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, Tortuguero is a town and a national park on a narrow coastal strip separated from the mainland by several waterways. Wonderfully laidback, the culture here has strong Afro-Caribbean vibes, differentiating it from the rest of the country. There are long stretches of beach, canals and rainforest, all packed with wildlife, including crocodiles, and is an important breeding ground for the Green Turtle (July to September) as well as several other species.

### Day 4: Tortuguero

The Tortuguero area is full of biological diversity, with habitats including rainforest, swamp and lagoon. The beaches are a nesting ground for Green Turtles between July and September, whilst the rivers are home to caimans, crocodiles and manatees and the forest boasts jaguars, sloths, monkeys and 375 species of birds. Exploring it will be a real adventure! This morning walk the trails around your hotel, and in the afternoon take a boat trip on the area's waterways, which will take approximately 2 hours.



#### Destination Information

**Hiking trails** – Your Tortuguero hotel is sat in 15 acres of land that is full of trees and exotic plants – it even has a butterfly garden. A series of easy trails have been created that will guide you on a journey through Costa Rica's flora, with information to help you identify the medicinal qualities of some and the unique characteristics of others.

**Canal boat trip** – Explore the canals of the Tortuguero National Park on a leisurely-paced canal boat. As you cruise along you can enjoy the lush biodiversity of the area, spotting monkeys (there are three different species), iguanas, crocodiles, alligators, turtles, manatees and 400 species of birds.

## Day 5: Sarapiquí

Depart Tortuguero by boat, returning to La Pavona. Transfer an hour to a local restaurant in Guapiles, before journeying another 1 hour 40 minutes to Sarapiquí at the heart of Costa Rica's northern lowlands, nestled amongst lush rainforest. Check in to your rainforest lodge accommodation and settle in.



### Destination Information

**Sarapiquí** – Located in the northern lowlands, Sarapiquí is wholly tropical, full of lush fruit plantations and covered in rainforest. The region is also known for its adventure activities, such as white water rafting, and for its biodiversity – it is one of the last few areas in Costa Rica where you can find the endangered Green Macaw and has a number of national parks and reserves.

## Day 6: Sarapiquí

Embark on a 2 hour 30-minute tour dedicated to chocolate at La Tirimbina. Crossing the suspension bridge, visit a former cacao-tree plantation where you'll learn from your trained guide about the history of the tree and its lucrative fruit. Watch the chocolate-making process first-hand and have a taste of the final product. The chocolate is produced by the Asociacion de Mujeres Amazilia del Caribe, a group of local women who are working to improve their lives through social enterprise and to rescue the native cacao tree. You will need to wear closed shoes or boots for this tour. Transfer by road to the Arenal area, a journey of around 1 hour 50 minutes, named after the magnificent Arenal Volcano.



### Destination Information

**La Tirimbina** – An eco-tourism destination that offers education in a lush forest full of a huge diversity of flora and fauna. Exploring the forest and discovering native species, including the cacao plant.



## Day 7: Arenal

In the shadow of Arenal, the Mistico Park gives a whole new perspective of the rainforest with a series of suspension bridges at canopy level. As you walk through the trees, you'll be able to spot all sorts of wildlife, birds, flowers and vegetation. Spend the day walking the easy trails (there are some steeper up and down sections) and taking in your beautiful natural surroundings.

### Destination Information

**Mistico Park** – Located within the Volcano Arenal National Park, Mistico Park is formed of a series of suspension bridges and trails that run for 3 kilometres through a private rainforest reserve. The forest here is transitional, running from tropical into wet forest, making it extremely high in biodiversity. There are 15 bridges in total, 6 of which are hanging (will move under foot) – from many of them you will get wonderful views of the volcano and Lake Arenal.

## Day 8: Monteverde

Depart Arenal and transfer approximately 30 minutes to Arenal Lake dock and voyage 30 to 40 minutes in a pontoon boat across Arenal Lake to the little town of Rio Chiquito. This lake is Costa Rica's largest, especially since it tripled in size with the construction of the Arenal Dam in 1979. The views of Arenal volcano as you cruise will be fantastic. Transfer the rest of the way to Monteverde by road, about 2 hours' travelling up into the highlands. Enjoy an afternoon tour of the Don Juan coffee estate where you'll learn all about the coffee making process, from harvest to processing, and the humble coffee bean itself. The tour lasts about 2 hours and involves a 10-minute walk along an easy track.



### Destination Information

**Volcan Arenal** – An active volcano standing at 1,633 metres tall, Arenal is a 'young' volcano at about 7,500 years old. Up until 2010, when it became dormant, Arenal was one of the most active volcanoes in the world. Its conical cone is one of Costa Rica's most well-known sights.

## Day 9: Monteverde

Spend a full day exploring the natural wonders of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve with a guide. This reserve covers 26,000 acres of virgin forest which a huge amount of Costa Rica's native flora and fauna call home. Cloud Forest is a highland rainforest, characterised by the clouds and fogs that settle in the lush canopy – the humidity here hovers at around 100%! The reserve shelters jaguars, pumas and over 450 species of bird, including the quetzal. Trails throughout the reserve are well-maintained but can be muddy.



### Destination Information

**Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve** – One of the most famous conservation areas in Central America, Monteverde consists of 26,000 acres of cloud forest, 90% of which is virgin. At 1,440 metres above sea level, the area is cloud forest rather than rainforest and within the reserve there are 2,500 plant species, 100 mammal species, 400 bird species and 120 reptilian and amphibian species. This is the best place to try and spot the resplendent quetzal, a beautiful bird native to Central America.

### Day 10: Manuel Antonio

Travel down from Monteverde to the lush lowlands and dazzling white sands of the Pacific coast. This transfer takes about 4 hours. Set amongst verdant nature is the oceanside village of Manuel Antonio where you will spend the next two nights.



### Day 11: Manuel Antonio

Enjoy a 2 hour 30 minutes guided hike of Manuel Antonio National Park, Costa Rica's most protected area. There is a huge range of breathtaking flora and fauna here – as you stroll the park's trails, keep an eye out for white-faced capuchin monkeys, raccoons and a range of beautiful bird species. There'll also be time to have a dip in the warm Pacific waters. As with Costa Rica's other national parks, the trails here are well-maintained and well-marked.



#### Destination Information

**Manuel Antonio National Park** – Providing shelter to many of Costa Rica's endangered species, Manuel Antonio may be Costa Rica's smallest park but it is considered as one of the best. Internationally, this park is considered one of the most biodiverse in the world and covers a diverse range of eco-systems, from tropical forest to lagoons, mangroves and beaches. 109 species of mammal prowl the park and 184 species of bird whilst there are also four beautiful beaches which you can enjoy.

### Day 12: Manuel Antonio

Enjoy a day at leisure in Manuel Antonio. You can use the time to explore the area farther or enjoy a bit of relaxation on the beautiful Pacific beaches.



### Day 13: San José

begin the journey back to San José, which takes around 3 hours, stopping en route at the Carara National Park. Enjoy the diverse nature of a transitional forest, a mix of dry tropical reserve and humid jungle created by changes in topography. It is home to many mammals and plant and tree species as well as the rare Scarlet Macaw. The trails here are well-maintained and make for easy walking. Arrive in San José.



#### Destination Information

**Carara National Park** – Close to capital San José, this popular national park occupies a transitional zone from dry tropical forest to humid jungle habitats, making it wonderfully unique. ‘Carara’ means crocodile in the native ‘Huetar’ language, and there are many that call the park home, alongside white-face capuchin monkeys, scarlet macaws, toucans, peccaries, anteaters and poison-arrow frogs.

### Day 14: San José

Today you will glide gently through the rainforest canopy aboard the Rainforest Aerial Tram, located in a private reserve. The tram travels at a leisurely pace, covering 2.6 kilometres, giving you the chance to examine the many layers of the rainforest canopy and the flora and fauna that call it home.



#### Destination Information

**Rainforest Aerial Tram** – The aerial tram travels slowly through the rainforest canopy, giving you a unique opportunity to spot plants and watch birds from a new vantage point. The journey takes about 1 hour 20 minutes. Each tram seats six people plus a nature guide, and is open air with a canvas awning. Part of a private reserve, a visit here also includes a guided nature walk so you can see the rainforest from all levels.

### Day 15-16: Fly San José to UK

Transfer to the airport, approximately 15 minutes, and fly to the UK, arriving home the following day.



## Colours of Costa Rica Travel Information

### Visas

UK passport holders do not require a visa to enter Costa Rica.

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

### Eating in Costa Rica

Costa Rican cuisine is a combination of typical Latin American fare, and influences of both the colonial Spanish and Afro-Caribbeans.

The food is mild, and has a high reliance on fresh fruit and vegetables – which isn't much of a surprise when you consider Costa Rica's huge biodiversity. Staple foods include rice and black beans, which are served at most meals, alongside plantain and grilled or sautéed meat or fish.

A typical breakfast is Gallo Pinto – rice and beans stir-fried

together and served with eggs and sour cream or cheese, whilst a typical lunch, casado, is rice and beans (not mixed) with meat and a salad. Both are delicious and seasoned beautifully with local herbs and vegetables. The indigenous people of the Central American region ate corn as a large part of their diet, and it still features today. Tamales, for example, were introduced by the Aztecs and are still eaten at celebrations, especially Christmas. These are a dough of cornmeal, lard and spices stuffed with meat, rice and vegetables and steamed in a leaf. Another food not too miss are empanadas, a delicious snack. Similar to a Cornish pasty but with a corn-based dough, these are filled with beef, chicken, cheese or fruit.

Whilst we strongly recommend trying as many local dishes as possible, Costa Rica also has a wide range of international foods available – Chinese and Italian are particularly popular.



### Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to rainforest lodges. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality may exist between the UK and Costa Rica. All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

## Transport

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers between destinations. Roads in Costa Rica have generally been improved over recent years, but please be aware traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. There may be sections of road where the surface may be comparatively bumpy but our drivers will do their utmost to lessen the impact.

## Optional activities

A list of optional activities and approximate costs will be provided with your final documents. These can be arranged by your guide and are paid for locally.

## Souvenirs

There are plenty of interesting bits and pieces to buy as souvenirs in Costa Rica, such as indigenous handicrafts and artworks, coffee and chocolate, carved wood and products made from the abundance of exotic local fruits, such as jams, jellies and sweets. There will be some opportunities during your tour to pick up souvenirs.

## Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 30 travellers in each group.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

## Tipping Policy

Tipping in Costa Rica is not mandatory, however, if you feel that the service you received should be rewarded, leaving a small tip is very much appreciated.

## Climate

Costa Rica has two distinct seasons, dry season and wet season, though its varied topography also plays a role in local weather systems. The dry season is mid-November to April and is characterised by dry days and occasionally blustery winds – this is peak season and is often booked up with tourists. The wet season, May to mid-November, comes with sunny mornings and afternoon showers – at this time the country is wonderfully green and less crowded. Please be aware that it may be wet during your visit to Costa Rica, so packing a rain jacket and suitable shoes is highly recommended.

### After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

### Itinerary changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

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