



PACKAGE COSTA RICA TRAVEL TIPS AND USEFUL INFORMATION

Meeting Package Costa Rica: Unless otherwise specified, a Package Costa Rica Representative, likely Fernando or Francisco, will meet you the airport. This person will carry a sign with your name and our company logo; it will be very hard for you to miss each other. The sign will be a letter sized paper print glued on a white legal size envelope. This envelope is also your “welcoming package.” (Please be sure to read section regarding the contents of the welcoming package at the bottom of this e-mail).

Most important—don’t believe the taxi drivers that “your guide won’t show up and you should go with me”. Once we’ve got you, you’re done with the hard stuff. The rest is all easy – like climbing mountains, twisting down rivers, startling a few toucans from their nests, etc.

Arrival: What to declare: Customs forms are usually distributed on the airplane. The form asks you to declare everything COMMERCIAL you are bringing into the country. If you have any food (including fruits, vegetables, sausages, etc.) or substances which can be sniffed by dogs, you will be stopped.

When you get off the plane you will first be shuffled through the immigration area, where they will check your passport. Once through passport control go downstairs to pick your luggage (there are free metal carts there to move your stuff about in the small baggage area), and then luggage goes through X-ray machine (they are looking for fresh fruits/meats etc.).

After clearing customs: The luggage carts stop at the exterior door. If heavy, you’ll need a porter which has to be hired from the people inside the building... Package Costa Rica can’t grab stuff until outside the “gauntlet”.

What to Bring. If you can possibly do it, use only carry-on luggage (liquids and toothpaste have 3 ounce limits per item, packaged in a Ziploc bag, but otherwise you are allowed 40 pounds in the carry-on plus a purse or camera bag or computer, etc.). Lost luggage is a common problem when you are making connecting flights, and reporting lost luggage takes half a day. We strongly recommend that you use soft-sided duffel bag style luggage (because it is easier and to keep dry under roof rack covers, if these were to be used) and **avoid hard-sided cases.**

Clothing: Most of Costa Rica is truly only moderately tropical. Light weight clothing is advised, but long sleeves offer better protection from the sun and, when off the beaten path, against insects and foliage. A few pair of shorts, T-shirts and at least one pair of long pants for horseback riding and or ziplining, and for evening meals where insects might nibble on your ankles. You’ll need some light clothing but also one jacket, sweatshirt or light weight Polar fleece (best because it dries quickly) for warmth. A lot of Costa Rica is at

high altitude (4000-7000 ft.), and it can get into the low 50's after dark. Use layers for warmth. Strong **shoes** that can get wet and dry quickly are best (strong tennis shoes/cross-trainers advised) since air drying may be nearly impossible between activities, bring at least 2 pair. Generally, strong tennis shoes are great for serious treks, zip lines and horseback riding. We additionally recommend closed toe sandals or tennis for canyoning or white-water rafting. **Raincoat:** When it does rain, it is usually very warm, and serves well to wash away the sweat and mud you've accumulated today. A **poncho** is more versatile, because you can also sit on it, roll up wet clothes in it, and it also gives more breathing room to your arms, etc. For evening sandals, light casual clothing and at least a long sleeve lightweight shirt for warmth. Meals, even at the fanciest hotels, are very informal, so just be comfortable. It does get pretty cool in the evenings (middle 60's) in the mountain areas, so don't get caught with nothing to keep you warm. Long sleeve collared shirts for men in San José nicer restaurants advisable.

GENERAL, **DON'T FORGET** personal medications, sun block, insect repellent, anti-sting cream (like Cortaid or other after bite lotion- the type of insect bites in Costa Rica may have very different reactions than the types you are used to in the North America or Europe, so be prepared) artificial sweetener (if you use it), a wide-brim hat (necks and ears get really burned!), and, if you wear glasses or sunglasses, a strap to keep them in place as well as a backup pair. If you want to bring a camera on the raft, be sure its waterproof or investigate the underwater/waterproof bags available from good camera shops, or the cheap disposable waterproof cameras. The rafting operators we use, has kayak photographer in most every trip, this is simply the best option.

No matter how fancy the waterproof bag is for a camera, everything that can be "opened" during the raft trip will get WET. Even on non-rafting days, the humidity can condense on lenses and interiors of camera, so airtight cameras need desiccants. You might consider a pocket knife, a small "fanny pack", a small flashlight (a real MUST), and small personal first aid kit (bandages, antibiotic ointment, and anti-insect bite cream). Electricity is the same as for the USA (110 Volt) but many hotels have only with 2-prong (polarized style OK) outlets.

We also recommend you bring:

- your MP3 player (or other kind) for listening while travelling from one location to the next
- Binoculars, for many viewing opportunities like wildlife, offshore islands, volcanoes, etc
- A good read
- A small bag, to take your personal item when you go on a tour
- Extra memory cards for your camera
- Biking gloves, if you will be driving ATV or paddling a kayak
- A bandana, it has many uses
- Snacks, such as power bars, granola bars or packaged treats

Notice from homeland security: As of January 1, 2008, travellers may no longer pack spare lithium batteries of any kind in checked baggage. Passengers wishing to carry spare lithium

batteries for devices such as laptops, cell phones and cameras are now required to pack them in their carry-on baggage with the terminals covered/insulated. Travellers may check bags that contain batteries, as long as they are installed in electronic devices. Please see the following web site for tips: <http://safetravel.dot.gov/tips.html>.

Converting money: Bring only U.S. dollars in cash (traveller's checks not recommended). Any other currency must be exchanged only at the central bank in San Jose, and is a long process (read: half a day!). The exchange rate in the airports in the U.S. is something like \$1 = 470 colones; in San José the exchange (March 2010) is \$1 = 515+ colones and changing daily. The exchange rate for **travellers check** is lower and must be exchanged in banks (read: 2 hours in bank line!). If we're meeting your flight we'll help with the exchange. Future sudden currency adjustments are likely, so exchange rate information mentioned above may be obsolete tomorrow.

Credit cards work well in the Central Valley and the more established communities where there are phone lines for authorization. You may pay a premium to use the card (consult this with your credit card company. VISA is the most accepted credit card in Costa Rica; MasterCard is also widely accepted and is growing in popularity. ATM cards from your local bank will work in most ATM machines in the country. You will find these Central Valley and the more established communities

Passports: Mandatory for all persons, regardless age. Passport cannot expire within 1 month of arrival date. Check visa requirements by nationality on Costa Rica government website: <http://www.cpstarica-embassy.org/consular/visa/country-selection.htm>. We recommend all travels carry a copy of their passports photo page in a zip lock bag at all times.

Luggage: New urgent requirement: Additionally, carry a photocopy of your passport! Package Costa Rica can't get into the airline desk to help with LOST LUGGAGE. To get lost luggage, you must have a PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR PASPORT to leave with the desk clerk, and an ADDRESS for the airline to deliver your luggage to. So give them the NAME of the hotel where you will be the first night (the hotel name will suffice). The copy of your passport and the claim number on your baggage check (be sure to write down the claim number for your records, too. Sorry we won't be able to help you in this ordeal, security rules prohibit access to luggage areas.

Bugs: There are always insects and small animals around you while travelling in Costa Rica—sometimes in your own bedroom, even at the best hotel, definitely in ecolodges and beach hotels. Ants, geckos, small lizards and sometimes large and impressive beetles enter rooms, vehicles and restaurants. Avoid taking any foodstuff into your room, (even an open roll of TUMS will attract ants) and be happy when you see small lizards and geckos (they eat mosquitoes). You can find clothing treated with Permethrin, or buy a can and spray on your clothing before coming to Costa Rica (we recommend Sawyer Duranon Permethrin insect repellent—available at www.cabelas.com) ; insect repellent in bottles (BEN's 100% DEET, 1.25 ounce- get the drop bottle, not spray pump—more convenient—at www.cabelas.com), rather than compressed gas sprays (think AIRLINE RESTRICTIONS), allow "spot treatment" of exposed skin rather than spraying the environment.

Medicines and inoculations: We recommend you have your TETANUS inoculation brought up to date— you'll likely need this medication while in Costa Rica doing silly adventure stuff. Costa Rica has been free of dangerous parasite diseases (Malaria, yellow fever,

typhoid) for a long time. In 1996 malaria reappeared in the two port cities (Puntarenas and Limon), was contained to those areas and eradicated quickly (using DDT). Dengue (mosquito-carried) has also appeared, again in the poor neighbourhoods. Insect repellent is the best deterrent, and we recommend using the spray on or roll-on type whenever out for evenings.

Parasitic infections are rare in Costa Rica, and drinking water quality in Costa Rica is excellent. Bottled water is readily available; however, in all the areas we travel it is completely safe to drink water straight from the tap, unless the hotel specifically directs you to drink bottled water.

Costa Rica Roads: Pretty bad in many places, but improved significantly in the last 2 years. Costa Rica has no military need to keep the roads free of potholes, or to make the roads wide enough for two vehicles to pass. In many instances the local population is not in a particularly big hurry to walk their horses to town. So the roads can be atrocious. **By far the most dangerous activity of Package Costa Rica is driving on the main roads of the country**, especially after dark. With no white outer edge lines, no centre yellow lines, no reflecting cat eyes on curves, no guard rails, a LARGE selection of (unmarked) one-lane bridges with no guard rails, lots of trucks going 30 km/hour an hour with no taillights, and pedestrians who believe that, if they can see your headlights, certainly you can see them in the middle of the road, and, the crowning glory, dense, tropical fog. It is a challenge. Did we also mention no direction signs or route numbers? Package Costa Rica itinerary designers do almost anything to avoid having you on a drive at night, but sometimes it is unavoidable (there's only 12 hours of daylight year round, so sometimes the driving gets pushed into the foggy night...)

Making Phone calls: As in: finding a phone somewhere. Costa Rica's rural phone system is quite good by neighbouring country standards. In an emergency family and friends should call Package Costa Rica office and ask us to contact your group. If you need to call, we recommend you buy a calling card called "197" available at supermarkets, minimarts and convenience stores in Costa Rica.

The good news: What Costa Rica lack's in wealth, they more than make up for in warmth. You may think they are poor. But the Costa Rican country folk know they are surrounded by a caring community that always joins in to support those who need help. The Costa Ricans always extend this familial acceptance to even to foreigners, and this, believe us, is the greatest treasure of Costa Rica—a genuinely free, energetic and graciously open people. While you are with us, take a good look at the Costa Rican people—full faced, open smiles, at the sparkling cleanliness of their clothes and their small houses, at their carefully maintained vibrant gardens. Look straight in their faces and you'll see the pride that the Costa Ricans take in living life well.

Sample Packing List

NOTE: Remember, PACK LIGHTLY and according to the activities you will be enjoying. This list covers lots of activities. Possibly more than you'll be doing on your trip.

Clothes:

3 or 4 T-shirts (cotton or of some quick drying fabric)

- 2 or 3 Shorts (men can include swim trunks here)
- 1 pair of light weight long pants for keeping out the sun, bugs, and foliage, and/or
- 1 pair of heavier weight pants for horseback riding or cooler evenings
- 1 long sleeved lightweight shirt for sun, bugs and foliage
- 1 fleece or sweatshirt for cool evenings (you'll need it for the plane, too, it also doubles a pillow during a drive)
- 1 or 2 bathing suits (2 if you head to the beach)
- 1 windbreaker (for high altitude mountain hiking/ biking) or waterproof poncho

Shoes:

- 1 pair of sneakers or sturdy shoes for getting wet and muddy- CLOSED TOES! No open toe sandals or Velcro closure shoes!—Velcro doesn't hold if it gets wet.
- 1 pair of sneakers or closed shoe for staying dry
- 1 pair of sandals or comfortable shoe for staying dry and nice (evenings) (flip flops are perfect for this)

Toiletries:

- Personal Medications! Sun block! Insect repellent!
- Small first aid kit: band-aids, after bite lotion/cream, after sun lotion, pain killer of your choice
- Glasses and back up pair & strap to hold them to your head, and/or Contacts, fluids and a spare set of lenses
- Hat with a wide brim or baseball hat to keep off the sun, you'll NEED this.
- 1 small flashlight

The Welcoming Package contains a copy of your final itinerary as well as the vouchers. There will be a voucher for each of the accommodation, transportation or tour services which comprise the package. The voucher is important since it states the number of passengers, items included in each service (such as meals included in hotel stay) and **specially the tour times**. Tour times are very important, so you know what time to expect to tour provider to pick you up for your tour. Please be sure to be ready to go by the designated time.

Emergencies: If for any reason you need us, call us! Our phone in Costa Rica is 2291-6991 Monday- Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. local time. We can also supply cell phone numbers of our personnel for aftertimes.

We hope you enjoy your trip with Package Costa Rica as much as we enjoy putting it all together for you.

Sincerely,

Matías Flores

Itinerary Designer

Package Costa Rica