

Costa Rica Homestay

ITINERARY NIGHTS: San Jose Homestay (7)

HIGHLIGHTS: San José City Tour • Moravia • Poás Volcano • La Paz Waterfall Garden • Café Britt Tour • Barva Volcano Nature Hike • Orosi Valley Tour • Cartago • Irazú Volcano • Lankester Botanical Gardens • Pacific Coast Beach Day

OPTIONS: Braulio Carrillo and Aerial Tram • 10 hours of Language Instruction



This program provides a unique opportunity to combine, in one visit to Costa Rica, the excitement and adventure of Costa Rica with the experience of everyday family life in San José. While living with your host family in San José, you will participate in a variety of cultural and educational activities. This program is a once in a lifetime opportunity to experience the real Costa Rica. Students are housed two per family and three meals a day are provided.

DAY 1 Journey to Costa Rica! You'll arrive in the capital, San José, where your TSA Tours local guide will meet you at the airport and introduce you to your host family. Settle in and get acquainted with your new *familia*. While in Costa Rica, be sure to taste the delicious *gallo pinto*, a popular dish made with spiced rice and black beans.

DAY 2 SAN JOSE On your **San José City Tour**, see Rohrmoser, a charming residential area that is home to many embassies; the Teatro Nacional, built in 1897 from a self-imposed coffee tax; the Gold Museum, which houses a dazzling collection of pre-Columbian gold pieces; and the Museo Nacional, where you can still see the bullet holes in the turrets from the 1948 civil war. Also visit **Moravia**, a town famous for its leather crafts and excellent souvenir shopping.

DAY 3 SAN JOSE Hike the **Poás Volcano**, one of the biggest craters in the world. The road to the top of the cloud forest winds through fertile hillsides planted with terraced rows of dark-green coffee bushes, strawberry fields, and fern

plantations. Poás is also thought to have the largest volcanic geysers. Then visit the **La Paz Waterfall Gardens**, Costa Rica's newest nature park, and learn about the country's butterflies, orchids and hummingbirds. In the world's largest enclosed Butterfly Observatory you will have the opportunity to release a newly emerged butterfly by hand. At the Hummingbird Garden, watch the territorial antics of the 16 different species known to frequent these gardens. Five magnificent waterfalls with nine observation platforms allow you a close up view of the falls and the spectacular La Paz River.

DAY 4 SAN JOSE Spend a free day with your host family. **Optional:** Travel through picturesque Braulio Carrillo National Park, one of the largest rain forests in Costa Rica. Ride high above the tropical forest on the Aerial Tram, where a knowledgeable guide will point out the orchids, different species of trees, and identify the calls of birds that inhabit this special environment. The cars of the tram frequently come to a stop, allowing you to view the forest canopy at leisure and

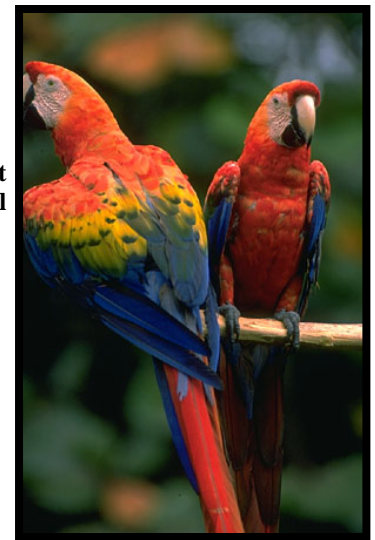
admire the enormous diversity of plant life growing on the boughs of the larger trees.

DAY 5 SAN JOSE Travel through a panoramic valley to learn how the finest coffee is farmed. On the **Café Britt Tour** you will visit a working coffee farm (*finca*), see the fields, a roasting factory and a folkloric dance. Costumed guides take you through the history of coffee growing and demonstrate how crucial this export crop is to the country. More



coffee plantations dot the hillsides on the way to a guided **Nature Hike** (or horseback ride) at the **Barva Volcano**, a dormant volcano surrounded by lush tropical cloud forest. Along the trail you will view gorgeous landscapes overlooking the Central Valley. Epiphytic orchids, ferns and bromeliads create a truly enchanting atmosphere in which the elusive Resplendent Quetzal and other beautiful birds found only in the highlands thrive.

DAY 6 SAN JOSE Today's scenic trip to the spectacular **Orosi Valley** includes a visit to the **Lankester Botanical Gardens** to marvel at its collection of over 1,100 varieties of orchids and other tropical plants.



Also visit the pilgrimage *Basilica* in **Cartago**, the former capital of Costa Rica. Then travel through an area known as "the Shangri-La of Central America" to enjoy a bird's eye view from the top of **Irazú**, Costa Rica's highest volcano. A striking, yellow-green lake fills the volcano's large, principal crater, and is surrounded by jagged cliffs of sulfur-streaked lava. In Irazú's cloud forest you'll see magical old oak trees covered with lichen and bromeliads. Look down through the clouds to a panorama of potato fields and bright green fern forests.

DAY 7 SAN JOSE Take a day trip to the Central Pacific Coast for a **Beach Day** adventure of sun, surf and sand on one of the area's beautiful beaches. The most popular beaches are found in the Puntarenas area. Its capital, the port of Puntarenas, lies on a narrow strip of land protruding into the Gulf of Nicoya, about 70 miles away from San Jose. Tonight, enjoy your last evening with your host family.

DAY 8 DEPART Jet home with improved language skills, fabulous memories of the friendly and hospitable people of Costa Rica and of your wonderful homestay experience.

10 hours of OPTIONAL language instruction includes cooking, dancing and conversation classes, books and materials.

For more information, please contact: