

COSTA RICA

Costa Rica, officially the Republic of Costa Rica, is a country in Central America. It's bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the south-southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west and south and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Costa Rica was the first country in the world to constitutionally abolish its army. Costa Rica represents .03 percent of the surface of the earth yet is home to 6 percent of the world's biodiversity. Christopher Columbus discovered Costa Rica in 1502, believing it to be abundant in gold he proclaimed the land "Costa Rica" or "Rich Coast."

TRANSPORTATION

Rental cars are a little pricey due to the required insurance, but taxis make things easy. Rates are reasonable, drivers know the roads, the vans are clean and comfortable, and you are provided with door to door service.

BANKS AND CURRENCY

Banks open M-F at 8am and close between 3pm and 6pm. The Colon, also denoted by CRC, is the official currency of Costa Rica. The colon is subdivided into 100 centimos, but coins are rarely used anymore due to

rency slang would be helpful to know. People of Costa Rica call the 100 colon bill a "teja," while the 500-colon bill is called a "cinco teja." "Rojo" and "tucan" are the slang terms for 1,000 and 5,000 colon bills. The US dollar has long been considered the second currency of Costa Rica and is widely used in tourist areas. If you bring US dollars make sure they are new and crisp.

SHOPPING

Most shops are open from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, while some open at 8:00 am and others close at 7:00pm; most grocery stores close at 8:00pm. Some shops close for lunch.

CLIMATE

Costa Rica is a tropical country which contains several distinct climatic zones. There is no winter or summer as such and most regions have a rainy season from May to November and a dry season from December to April. Annual rainfall averages 100 inches nationwide with some mountainous regions getting as much as 25 feet on exposed eastern slopes. Temperature is more a matter of elevation than location with a mean of around 72 degrees in the Central Valley, 82 degrees on the Atlantic coast and 89 degrees on the Pacific coast.

EATING

Costa Rica cuisine is very simple...no major spices or unfamiliar tastes. The native dishes rely heavily on rice and beans. For breakfast, you will typically see Gallo Pinto, fried rice and black beans. For lunch, you may see chicken with rice or tuna with rice. Fruit is very plentiful in Costa Rica, while vegetables are not a big part of the Costa Rican diet.

ACTIVITIES

There are many outdoor adventures for you to enjoy while in Costa Rica. While white water rafting is the overwhelming favorite, there are two other popular tour options. The canopy tour lets you "fly" over the forest using a system of trails, suspension bridges, and zip lines. The crocodile safari cruise takes you up the Tarcoles River into the heart of crocodile country.

GENERAL INFO

Ambulance, Fire, Police emergencies 911
US Embassy (506) 519-2000
Post Office M-F 7:30am to 5pm Sat- Limited



WHAT TO PACK

A photocopy of your passport's identification page
Your airline ticket, credit card numbers, and phone number to call in case of loss
1 pair of hiking/tennis shoes and water shoes/sport sandals for water
2 short sleeve quick-dry shirts (cotton or light synthetic)
1 quick-dry long sleeve shirt
1 pair quick-dry pants– not jeans as they are slow to dry
1 pair hiking shorts with pockets
4 pairs quick dry socks– cotton tube socks will not dry overnight
Bathing suit
Hat with visor
Rain gear ie: poncho, raincoat
Windbreaker or waterproof jacket
TSA backpack
Binoculars– a must for getting a closer look at wildlife
Plastic water bottle
Sunglasses
Sunscreen
Insect repellent
Pocket calculator– to make currency conversions
Flashlight
Toiletries
Plastic bag– to keep wet items in
Camera