Day 0, Sat, Jan 20th - Hotel Aeropuerto, Alajuela: Early Arrivals

Day 1, Sun, Jan 21st - Hotel Buena Vista, Poas: Arrive at Costa Rica

Day 2, Mon, Jan 22nd - Hotel Buena Vista, Poas: Poas Volcano & Freddo Fresas

Day 3, Tue, Jan 23rd - Arenal Country Inn, Fortuna: Fortuna - Los Lagos Hot Springs


Day 5, Thu, Jan 25th - Hotel El Bosque, Monteverde: Sta Elena & Frog Pond

Day 6, Fri, Jan 26th - Hotel El Bosque, Monteverde: Reserva Monteverde & Tour Chocolate

Day 7, Sat, Jan 27th - Hotel Canto de Ballenas, Uvita: Tarcoles River & Carara NP

Day 8, Sun, Jan 28th - Hotel Canto de Ballenas, Uvita: PN Marino Ballena

Day 9, Mon, Jan 29th - Hotel Danta Corcovado, La Palma: Sierpe Mangrove

Day 10, Tue, Jan 30th - Hotel Danta Corcovado, La Palma: Corcovado NP

Day 11, Wed, Jan 31st - Hotel Le Priss Inn, Manuel Antonio: Transfer to ML Antonio & Spheres Tour

Day 12, Thu, Feb 1st - Hotel Le Priss Inn, Manuel Antonio: Manuel Antonio NP

Day 13, Fri, Feb 2nd - Hotel Autentico, San Jose: San Jose City Tour

Day 14, Sat, Feb 3rd - Hotel Autentico, San Jose: Tapanti NP & Orosi Valley

Day 15, Sun, Feb 4th - Depart Costa Rica

Day 1, Sun, Jan 21st - Arrive in Costa Rica

Upon arrival, we will travel to the hotel, passing through the city of Alajuela. Before reaching the hotel for some relaxing and refreshing time before dinner, we will be crossing several rural towns and driving by coffee plantations and other agriculture fields (strawberry and fern farms).
**Day 2, Mon, Jan 22\textsuperscript{nd} - Poás Volcano & Rural Adventure**

**VOLCÁN POÁS NATIONAL PARK**

The Poás Volcano summit towers 2,708 meters above sea level, and features two craters, the main one being 1.5 kilometers in diameter and 300 meters deep. Occasionally, the volcano emits a great quantity of gases and steam from the various fumaroles located in the crater’s inner cone. You will have a great opportunity to visit tropical habitats: the tropical rainforest, the cloud forest, and the dwarf forest along the volcano crater rim.

We will visit Freddo Aventura Rural in Poasito for a wonderful tour, full of nature trails, strawberry fields, viewpoints of Poás and Barva volcanoes, and a visit to the dairy and the artisan cheese factory. A unique rural experience!

**Day 3 - Tue, Jan 23\textsuperscript{rd} - Transfer to Fortuna**

Today the trip will take us to the town of Fortuna located in the Costa Rican Northern Plains where, from the town’s main square, we will have the chance to see the slopes, and on clear days, the perfect cone shape of Volcán Arenal.
The rural town of Fortuna is at 253 meters above sea level. The people of this community are a hearty people with a strong business drive, who have converted this largely agricultural region into a booming commercial and tourism destination. The city features a lovely landscape, the most imposing features of which are the picture-perfect cones of Volcán Arenal and its eternal companion, Volcán Chato.

**Day 4 - Wed, Jan 24th - Arenal Volcano National Park - Hot Springs**

**VOLCÁN ARENAL & ARENAL LAKE**

The volcano landscape has two faces: one covered with lush vegetation sheltering a variety of wildlife, and the other rugged with lava tracts and sand from their most recent eruptions. Volcán Arenal has been considered dormant for the past few years.

We will be hiking in the Volcán Arenal National Park, where we will be able to see Lake Arenal. An 87.8-square-kilometer artificial lake at an elevation of 546 meters above sea level. Lake Arenal is also well known among windsurfers as the windsurfing center of Costa Rica, with winds reaching an average speed of 72 kilometers per hour.
Day 5 - Thur, Jan 25th - Transfer to Monteverde

Hot springs are a main attraction of Fortuna. At a temperature of 99 ° F, these waters relax muscles, clean the skin, and reduce stress. At Los Lagos we will enjoy the hot springs which include pools at various temperatures strewn among beautiful gardens.

Riding from Fortuna to Monteverde, we go around Lake Arenal, traveling from the Caribbean side towards the Pacific slopes, where we will be able to see the Golfo de Nicoya, an inlet of the Pacific Ocean. From there, we move from the tropical rainforest to the Monteverde Cloud Forest, driving by the tropical dry forest on the way.

Day 6 - Fri, Jan 26th - Hike the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

The reserve has a diversity of flora and fauna, much of which is unique in the world and is becoming a “must see” tourist attraction for nature enthusiasts and scientists to study its habitat. It has a number of trails to enjoy. Over 400 bird species, 490 butterflies, and 100 mammal species have been identified. There are also 2,500 plants species (500 of which are orchids) and thousands of insect species.
Day 7 - Sat, Jan 27th - Tárcoles River

On our way out of Monteverde, we head southward. En route to Carara National Park and Costa Rica’s south Pacific shore, we will see the Golfo de Nicoya and its islands, and we will have a chance to view the tropical dry forests of this region. We will detour for a journey along the Tárcoles River, also known as the Río Grande de Tárcoles, to see its mangroves and possibly some of its most famous residents, a healthy population of crocodiles that gather along the riverbanks to sunbathe. Additionally, we will have a good opportunity to view several of the aquatic birds that call these shores home.

Carara National Park has Costa Rica’s first official universal access trail. The park protects a transitional forest with ecosystems that are typical of the dry forest of the northern region and humid forest of the south. It is a sanctuary for the scarlet macaw. The streams that cross this park flow constantly throughout the year, which makes this area an incredibly important oasis for plants and animals during the dry season. Carara has varied ecosystems, including swamps formed by seasonal flooding of the Tárcoles River and the gallery forests along the banks of the Tárcoles River.

Day 8 - Sun, Jan 28th - Marino Ballena National Park

Depending on the tide, we will have the opportunity to see the tombolo known as the “Whale Tail” in Punta Uvita, a geological formation that is formed by the deposition of terrestrial and biogenic sands on the crest of rocks that join the head of the tombolo with the coast.

Ballena National Marine Park is the southernmost migration point of the humpback whale. The park was created in order to protect Bahía Coronado’s coral reefs and rocky shores, as well as the migrating whales (ballenas), which can be observed from December to April and from August to November. The coastal environment attracts colorful birds, and its rich waters are enticing to divers.
Day 9 - Mon, Jan 29th - Sierpe Mangrove & Drake Bay

The Térraba-Sierpe Ramsar Wetland, located at the mouth of the Térraba and Sierpe rivers, is periodically flooded by tidal action and has a good supply of mud rich in organic material. Common tree species include red and piñuela mangroves. Numerous seabirds, fish, crustaceans and mollusks inhabit the mangrove swamps, which are their ideal breeding ground. Considered the richest mangrove swamp in the world in terms of biodiversity, this wetland comprises a total of 27,066 hectares of protected forest.

Day 10- Tue, Jan 30th - Corcovado National Park

Protecting 41,788 hectares of shallow lagoons, marsh, mangrove swamps, rivers, wet forest and low-altitude cloud forest, as well as 46 kilometers of sandy beach, Corcovado is one of Central America’s most unique ecosystems—which is why naturalists from all over the world come to study its riches. Within its extensive territory, visitors can observe the rich biodiversity of the last pristine natural areas in all of Central America. Some 6,000 insect, 500 tree, 367 bird, 140 mammal, 117 amphibian and reptile, and 40 freshwater fish species live here in coexistence.

Day 11 - Wed, Jan 31st - Transfer to Manuel Antonio & Quepos Area

Before we cross Río Grande de Térraba (Térraba -Sierpe RAMSAR Wetland) Bridge, we stop at the Sierpe Spheres Museum (a.k.a. Finca 6 UNESCO site) to learn about ancient Costa Rican residents that carved perfectly shaped rock spheres. Nearly 2000 years ago a very advanced civilization in mathematical and astronomical knowledge developed in the Osa Peninsula. The Diquís created roads, settlements and their culture was known as far away as Peru, where a Spanish chronicler mentions in his writings that Peruvian indigenous leaders of the Conquest era traveled to Costa Rica, land of the spheres, to seek advice. At Finca 6, an archaeological site, we can still see the spheres in their original place, in a triangular formation. Between April 10 and 15, every year, the spheres are aligned with the sunrise, marking the change from the dry season to the rainy season in Costa Rica.

On our drive towards Manuel Antonio & Quepos we will be bordering El Paso de la Danta Biological Corridor (Tapir Biological Corridor) which links the natural habitats between Río Grande de Térraba and Río Savegre.
Day 12 - Thur, Feb, 1st - Visit Manuel Antonio National Park

Manuel Antonio National Park’s 683 hectares boast some of the country’s most varied and breathtaking scenery. Surrounded by lush, very wet tropical forest, the park’s trails offer sightings of white-faced monkeys, sloths, coatis, raccoons, iguanas and many bird species, as well as the Costa Rican squirrel monkey (Saimiri oerstedii citrinellus), which is endemic to Costa Rica Central and South Pacific Region—that is, it is found only in this part of the world. Increasingly endangered, at last count these monkeys numbered only 1,500.

The park protects 12 islands that serve as excellent refuges for several seabird species, as well as several stunning beaches (Espadilla Sur, Manuel Antonio, and Puerto Escondido), a 14-hectare lagoon and a mangrove swamp. Connecting Manuel Antonio and Espadilla Sur beaches, Punta Catedral is a place of great natural beauty.

Day 13 - Fri, Feb 2nd - San Jose City Tour

Upon arriving into San Jose from the Manuel Antonio & Quepos region, we will settle in the hotel to refresh and have lunch. In the afternoon, we will stroll around San Jose and have the opportunity to visit the Jade Museum. We will see the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica (Asamblea Legislativa) and the Old Bellavista Fort, whose barracks are home to the National Museum.

Construction of the military barracks took place between 1916 and 1930. In 1949, after the abolition of the army, the building was converted into the National Museum. Its fundamental purpose is to promote the study, conservation and display of the country’s flora and fauna. Currently, the museum’s main themes are archeology, national history and natural history.
The Jade museum houses a collection of pre-Columbian art (gold, ceramic, jade and stone), and is the only museum displaying indigenous jade artwork in the Americas.

**Day 14 - Sat, Feb 3rd - Tapantí NP & Orosí Valley**

On our last day in Costa Rica, we will visit the Tapantí National Park & Orosí Valley Region. After almost two weeks of traveling along the Costa Rican Pacific Coast, we will drive up to the mountains, the Cordillera de Talamancan, and have a unique opportunity to change our shorts and t-shirts for some long pants and a fleece.

The 58,323-hectare Tapantí-Macizo de la Muerte National Park has altitudes ranging from 1,220 to 2,560 meters above sea level and is located in one of the rainiest parts of the country. The park is home to 45 species of mammals, 260 bird species, and 30 reptile species, as well as ancient oak and alder forests. Fed by several tributaries, the Río Grande de Orosí runs through the area; its waters are used to produce hydroelectric energy and to provide part of the metropolitan area’s water supply.

After visiting Tapantí National Park, we will have the opportunity to visit/drive the towns of Orosí and Ujarrás, the first two Spanish settlements in the era of the Conquista. Here, visitors can see two of the only colonial buildings in the country: the renamed Ujarrás Ruins and the beautiful Orosí Church, built by Franciscan missionaries in 1743. Declared a national monument in 1985, the church houses considerable treasures in altarpieces, sacred images and other historical elements.
At 152 kilometers long, the Río Reventazón features stretches perfect for rafting, fishing or canoeing. The thick greenery on the river’s banks adds to the enjoyment of a trip down its waters. The mid zone of this river is the Cachí Hydroelectric Plant’s largest water supply source.

The dam began operating in 1966, generating 32,000 kilowatts of power, which doubled one year later. Its innovative use of the Reventazón’s waters makes it the first of its kind in Central America. The reinforced-concrete structure, 79 meters tall and 186 meters wide, draws the attention of both national and international tourists traveling through the Ujarrás Valley.

Day 15 - Sun, Feb 4th - Depart Costa Rica

After a lengthy stay in Costa Rica, all good things have an ending. After breakfast, we will drive back to the airport to catch your flights back home.