

# Contents

<b>List of Maps</b>	vi
---------------------	----

<b>What's New in Costa Rica</b>	1
---------------------------------	---

## 1 The Best of Costa Rica 4

1 The Best of Natural Costa Rica . . . . .	4	9 The Best Ecolodges & Wilderness Resorts . . . . .	16
2 The Best Beaches . . . . .	5	10 The Best Bed-and-Breakfasts & Small Inns . . . . .	17
3 The Best Adventures . . . . .	9	11 The Best Restaurants . . . . .	18
4 The Best Day Hikes & Nature Walks . . . . .	10	12 The Best Views . . . . .	19
5 The Best Bird-Watching . . . . .	12	13 The Best After-Dark Fun . . . . .	20
6 The Best Destinations for Families . . . . .	13	14 The Best Websites About Costa Rica . . . . .	21
7 The Best Luxury Hotels & Resorts . . . . .	14		
8 The Best Moderately Priced Hotels . . . . .	15		

## 2 Planning Your Trip to Costa Rica 22

1 The Regions in Brief . . . . .	22	11 Getting There . . . . .	41
2 Visitor Information . . . . .	24	12 Packages for the Independent Traveler . . . . .	44
3 Entry Requirements & Customs . . . . .	24	<i>Ask Before You Go</i> . . . . .	44
4 Money . . . . .	26	13 Escorted General-Interest Tours . . . . .	45
5 When to Go . . . . .	28	14 Special-Interest Trips . . . . .	45
<i>Calendar of Events</i> . . . . .	29	15 Getting Around Costa Rica . . . . .	47
6 Travel Insurance . . . . .	31	16 Tips on Accommodations . . . . .	51
7 Health & Safety . . . . .	32	17 Tips on Dining . . . . .	54
8 Specialized Travel Resources . . . . .	35	18 Recommended Books . . . . .	55
9 Planning Your Trip Online . . . . .	39	<i>Fast Facts: Costa Rica</i> . . . . .	56
10 The 21st-Century Traveler . . . . .	39		

## 3 Suggested Costa Rica Itineraries 62

1 Costa Rica in 1 Week . . . . .	62	4 A High-Octane Week of Adventures . . . . .	67
2 Costa Rica in 2 Weeks . . . . .	64	5 San José in 3 Days . . . . .	69
3 Costa Rica for Families . . . . .	66		

<b>4</b>	<b>The Active Vacation Planner</b>	<b>71</b>
1	Organized Adventure Trips . . . . .	71
2	Activities A to Z . . . . .	73
	<i>Where to See the Resplendent Quetzal</i> . . . . .	75
	<i>In Search of Turtles</i> . . . . .	83
3	Costa Rica's Top National Parks & Bioreerves . . . . .	84
	<i>Monkey Business</i> . . . . .	88
4	Tips on Health, Safety & Etiquette in the Wilderness . . . . .	89
5	Ecologically Oriented Volunteer & Study Programs . . . . .	89
<b>5</b>	<b>San José</b>	<b>91</b>
1	Orientation . . . . .	92
	<i>"I Know There's Got to Be a Number Here Somewhere . . . .": The Arcane Art of Finding an Address in San José</i> . . . . .	94
	<i>The Neighborhoods in Brief</i> . . . . .	95
2	Getting Around . . . . .	98
	<i>Fast Facts: San José</i> . . . . .	100
3	Where to Stay . . . . .	103
4	Where to Dine . . . . .	116
	<i>Only in the Central Valley: Dining under the Stars on a Mountain's Edge</i> . . . . .	120
5	What to See & Do . . . . .	124
6	Outdoor Activities & Spectator Sports . . . . .	129
7	Shopping . . . . .	131
	<i>Joe to Go</i> . . . . .	132
8	San José After Dark . . . . .	136
9	Side Trips from San José . . . . .	141
	<i>Holy Smoke! Choosing the Volcano Trip That's Right for You</i> . . . . .	146
<b>6</b>	<b>Guanacaste &amp; the Nicoya Peninsula: The Gold Coast</b>	<b>152</b>
1	Liberia . . . . .	154
2	La Cruz & Bahía Salinas . . . . .	160
3	Playa Hermosa, Playa Panamá & Papagayo . . . . .	163
4	Playa del Coco & Playa Ocotol . . . . .	169
5	Playas Flamingo, Potrero, Brasilito & Conchal . . . . .	174
6	Playa Tamarindo & Playa Grande . . . . .	180
7	Playa Junquillal . . . . .	192
8	Playa Nosara . . . . .	194
9	Playa Sámara . . . . .	199
10	Playa Tambor . . . . .	204
11	Playa Montezuma . . . . .	207
12	Malpaís/Santa Teresa . . . . .	213
<b>7</b>	<b>The Northern Zone: Mountain Lakes, Cloud Forests &amp; a Volcano</b>	<b>218</b>
1	Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí . . . . .	218
	<i>Taking a Soothing Soak in Hot Springs</i> . . . . .	229
2	Arenal Volcano & La Fortuna . . . . .	225
	<i>Boats, Horses &amp; Taxis</i> . . . . .	227
3	Along the Shores of Lake Arenal . . . . .	238
4	Monteverde . . . . .	242

<b>8</b>	<b>The Central Pacific Coast: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea</b>	<b>256</b>
1	Puntarenas . . . . .	256
	<i>Diving Trips to Isla del Coco (Cocos Island)</i> . . . . .	260
2	Playa de Jacó . . . . .	262
3	Manuel Antonio National Park . . . . .	274
4	Dominical . . . . .	292
5	San Isidro de El General: A Base for Exploring Chirripó National Park . . . . .	300
<b>9</b>	<b>The Southern Zone</b>	<b>306</b>
1	Drake Bay . . . . .	306
	<i>Those Mysterious Stone Spheres</i> . . . . .	310
2	Puerto Jiménez: Gateway to Corcovado National Park . . . . .	314
3	Golfito: Gateway to the Golfo Dulce . . . . .	323
4	Playa Zancudo . . . . .	328
5	Playa Pavones: A Surfer's Mecca . . . . .	332
<b>10</b>	<b>The Caribbean Coast</b>	<b>334</b>
1	Barra del Colorado . . . . .	334
2	Tortuguero National Park . . . . .	338
3	Limón: Gateway to Tortuguero National Park & Southern Coastal Beaches . . . . .	345
4	Cahuita . . . . .	348
5	Puerto Viejo . . . . .	354
	<b>Appendix A: Costa Rica in Depth</b>	<b>367</b>
1	The Natural Environment . . . . .	367
	<i>Dateline</i> . . . . .	371
2	Costa Rica Today . . . . .	369
3	History 101 . . . . .	370
4	<i>Gallo Pinto, Ceviche &amp; Frescos: Costa Rican Food &amp; Drink</i> . . . . .	373
	<b>Appendix B: Glossary of Spanish Terms &amp; Phrases</b>	<b>376</b>
1	Basic Words & Phrases . . . . .	376
2	Some Typical Tico Words & Phrases . . . . .	378
3	Menu Terms . . . . .	379
	<b>Appendix C: Costa Rican Wildlife</b>	<b>380</b>
1	Fauna . . . . .	380
2	Flora . . . . .	393
	<b>Index</b>	<b>399</b>

# List of Maps

The Best of Costa Rica	6	Guanacaste & the Nicoya Peninsula	153
Costa Rica in 1 Week	63	Tamarindo	181
Costa Rica in 2 Weeks	65	The Northern Zone	219
Costa Rica for Families	67	Monteverde	243
A High-Octane Week of Adventures	68	The Central Pacific Coast	257
San José in 3 Days	70	Manuel Antonio	275
San José	96	The Southern Zone	307
The Central Valley	143	The Caribbean Coast	335