ROAD TRIP · COSTA RICA

Your 14-day road trip from San José

National parks: 7 towns, flying home from San José.

Length	14 days, 13 nights
Distance	730 km, 8 driving days
Behind the wheel	15 h 30 min
Travellers	2, 1 room, 1 car
Hotels	Comfort: a good hotel (3 stars)
Flights	Amsterdam – San José (SJO), San José (SJO) – Amsterdam

CONTENTS

Monteverde	Days 1–2	**6**
Rincón de la Vieja	Days 3–4	**8**
Bijagua	Days 5–6	**10**
La Fortuna	Days 7–8	**12**
Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí	Days 9–10	**14**
Orosí	Days 11–12	**16**
Turrialba	Day 13	**18**

Day by day

DAY	DATE	NIGHT	KM	DRIVE	°C
1		Monteverde	130	2 h 50 min	
2		Monteverde			
3		Rincón de la Vieja	130	3 h 10 min	
4		Rincón de la Vieja			
5		Bijagua	50	2 h	
6		Bijagua			
7		La Fortuna	100	1 h 30 min	
8		La Fortuna			
9		Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí	80	1 h 10 min	
10		Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí			
11		Orosí	120	2 h 30 min	
12		Orosí			
13		Turrialba	40	1 h	
14		Flight home from SJO	80	1 h 40 min	

730 km · 15 h 30 min behind the wheel · on average 90 km a driving day

Kilometres and drive times by road (OSRM, OpenStreetMap), without stops: plan generously.

The route



Map: Natural Earth (public domain) · roads © OpenStreetMap contributors

ON THE ROAD

Day 1	Land at San José (SJO), drive to Monteverde · About 130 km, 2 h 50 min
Day 3	Monteverde, drive to Rincón de la Vieja · About 130 km, 3 h 10 min
Day 5	Rincón de la Vieja, drive to Bijagua · About 50 km, 2 h
Day 7	Bijagua, drive to La Fortuna · About 100 km, 1 h 30 min
Day 9	La Fortuna, drive to Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí · About 80 km, 1 h 10 min
Day 11	Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, drive to Orosí · About 120 km, 2 h 30 min
Day 13	Orosí, drive to Turrialba · About 40 km, 1 h
Day 14	Turrialba to San José airport (SJO), fly home to Amsterdam · About 80 km, 1 h 40 min

Well prepared

Passport and entry

Dutch and Belgian travellers need no visa for a holiday of up to 180 days. Your passport must be valid for the whole trip on arrival, and you show a return ticket at immigration. There is no ESTA or form beforehand; the departure tax is included in your air fare.
nederlandwereldwijd.nl/reisadvies/costa-rica

Driving licence and 4x4

Your Dutch or Belgian driving licence is valid for 90 days. For Monteverde, Santa Teresa, Drake Bay and the Nicoya coast road you want a 4x4: dirt roads, potholes and in the green season rivers to drive through. The compulsory liability insurance (SLI/TPL) is always bought from the rental company, even if your credit card gives cover.

On the road

Count on 40 to 50 km an hour on average: mountain roads, lorries and villages. Don't drive after dark; it is dark by six, all year round. Waze knows every road and warns of closures. Never leave anything visible in the car, not even for a moment.

Money

The currency is the colón, but almost everywhere takes dollars and credit cards. Bring a few small dollar notes for tips and parking. Restaurants add 10% service to the bill; an extra tip for a good nature guide (about $10 a person) is customary.

When to go

The dry season runs from December to April: sunny on the Pacific side and in Guanacaste. May to November is the green season, with sunny mornings and afternoon showers, quieter and cheaper; September and October are the wettest months, except on the Caribbean coast, where they are the driest.

Parks and entry fees

The national parks cost foreigners about $12 to $18 a person a day. For Manuel Antonio, Poás, Irazú and Corcovado you buy your ticket online beforehand from SINAC; Manuel Antonio is closed on Mondays.
serviciosenlinea.sinac.go.cr

Health

No vaccinations are required when you come from Europe. Protect yourself against mosquitoes (dengue), especially on the Caribbean coast. Tap water is drinkable in most places; ask in remote areas.

Packing list

- [ ] Passport (valid for the whole trip)
- [ ] Driving licence and credit card in the driver's name
- [ ] Travel and cancellation insurance
- [ ] Confirmations: flights, car, hotels, park tickets
- [ ] Rain jacket or poncho, even in the dry season
- [ ] Walking shoes that may get wet
- [ ] Insect repellent with DEET
- [ ] Reef-safe sunscreen
- [ ] Binoculars for birds and sloths
- [ ] A jumper for Monteverde and the volcanoes
- [ ] Plug adapter for type A/B (120 volts)

DON'T FORGET



DAYS 1–2

Monteverde Puntarenas

Walking in the cloud forest

Land at San José (SJO), drive to Monteverde: about 130 km, 2 h 50 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve
- Hanging bridges through the canopy
- Hummingbirds at the Hummingbird Café

With an extra night

With an extra night: the Santa Elena reserve, or a coffee and chocolate tour.

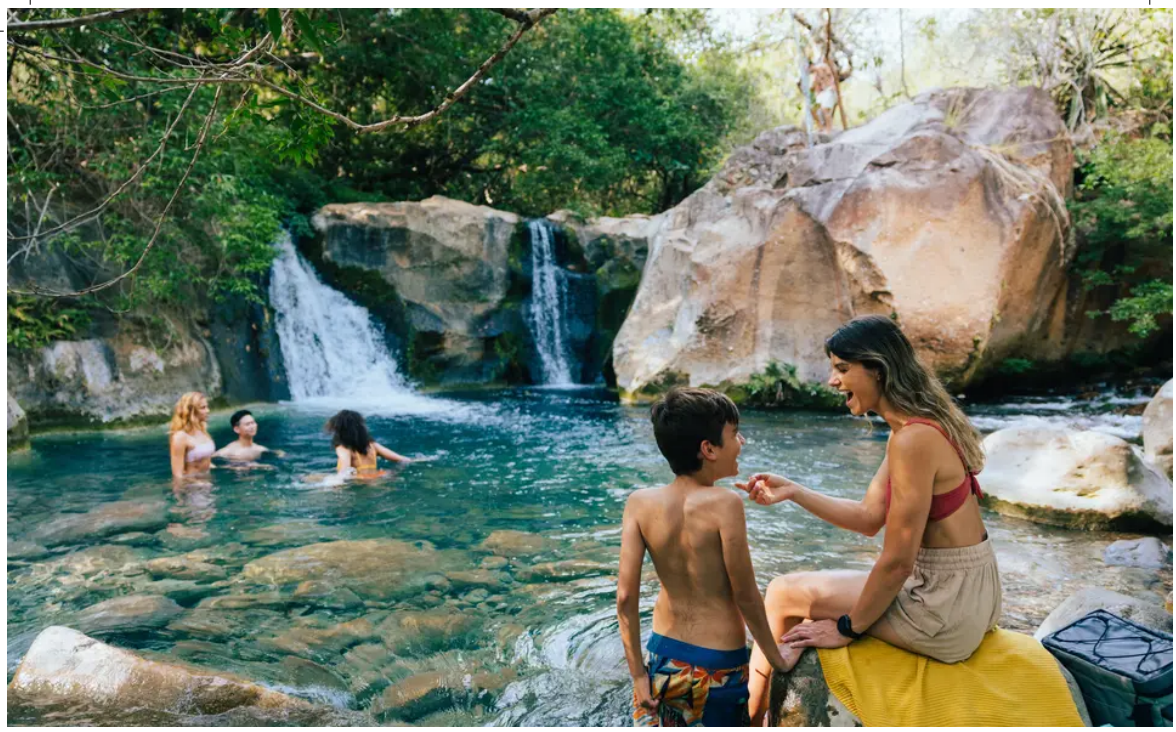
EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Cloud forest with a nature guide — roughly €50 a person
- [ ] Cloud forest night walk — roughly €30 a person
- [ ] Monteverde zipline — roughly €80 a person

HOTEL

- [ ] El Nido Lodge · 3★
  50m este de gasolinera 606
- [ ] ÉWA Homes Monteverde · 3★
- [ ] Finca Aquarius · 3★
- [ ] The Green Tree Lodge · 3★
  60109
- [ ] Villa Golondrina · 3★
  Calle los Leitón

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DAYS 3–4

Rincón de la Vieja Guanacaste

The mud pots and fumaroles of Rincón de la Vieja

Monteverde, drive to Rincón de la Vieja: about 130 km, 3 h 10 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- Las Pailas in the national park
- Oropéndola waterfall
- Hot springs and mud baths

With an extra night

With an extra night: tubing on the Río Negro, or on horseback through the dry forest.

EXCURSIONS

- ☐ Hot springs and mud bath — roughly €50 a person
- ☐ Zipline and river tubing — roughly €90 a person
- ☐ Horse ride through the dry forest — roughly €60 a person

HOTEL

Name, address, confirmation number:

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DAYS 5–6

Bijagua Alajuela

The sky-blue water of Río Celeste

Rincón de la Vieja, drive to Bijagua: about 50 km, 2 h

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- Río Celeste waterfall
- Los Teñideros, where the river turns blue
- Sloths in the gardens around Bijagua

With an extra night

With an extra night: tubing on the Río Celeste, or a night walk looking for frogs and tapirs.

EXCURSIONS

- ☐ Río Celeste guided hike — roughly €50 a person
- ☐ Night walk to see tapirs — roughly €40 a person

HOTEL

- ☐ Cabaña Montezion Bijagua · 3★
  800 Oeste Puesto G.A.R. Bijagua
- ☐ Paradise Rio Celeste 2 · 3★
  Bijagua Centro 50 mts este del Restaurante Poro lado derecho 1
- ☐ Yarumo Lodge Río Celeste Black Chalets · 3★
- ☐ Mei Tai Cacao Lodge · 3★
  Calle por Zapote
- ☐ Casitas Tenorio B&B · 3★
  3 km Sureste del Liceo

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DAYS 7–8

La Fortuna Alajuela

The cone of Arenal volcano

Bijagua, drive to La Fortuna: about 100 km, 1 h 30 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- Lava trails in Arenal National Park
- La Fortuna waterfall
- Hanging bridges through the rainforest
- Hot springs at the foot of the volcano

With an extra night

With an extra night: canyoning or rafting on the Balsa, or a day along Lake Arenal.

EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Arenal hanging bridges guided tour — roughly €60 a person
- [ ] Tabacón hot springs — roughly €90 a person
- [ ] Zipline over the rainforest — roughly €80 a person

HOTEL

- [ ] Alojamientos N&S · 3★
  La Fortuna de San Carlos
- [ ] Cabañas Litos · 3★
  Av. 331
- [ ] Jarabacoa Family Hostel · 3★
  san isidro de peñas blancas
- [ ] Natural Green Lodge · 3★
- [ ] Fortuna Retreat · 3★
  C. Don Vital Castro

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DAYS 9–10

Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí Heredia

Toucans and poison dart frogs at La Selva

La Fortuna, drive to Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí: about 80 km, 1 h 10 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- La Selva biological station
- Rafting on the Sarapiquí
- Chocolate tour at a cacao farm

With an extra night

With an extra night: rafting on the Sarapiquí, or a second early bird walk.

EXCURSIONS

- ☐ La Selva bird walk — roughly €50 a person
- ☐ Sarapiquí rafting — roughly €80 a person
- ☐ Chocolate tour — roughly €30 a person

HOTEL

Name, address, confirmation number:

NOTES



DAYS 11–12

Orosí Cartago

On Irazú volcano, above the clouds

Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, drive to Orosí: about 120 km, 2 h 30 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- The craters of Irazú volcano
- Orosí's colonial church
- The ruins of Ujarrás
- The basilica of Cartago

With an extra night

With an extra night: Tapantí park, or Orosí's hot springs.

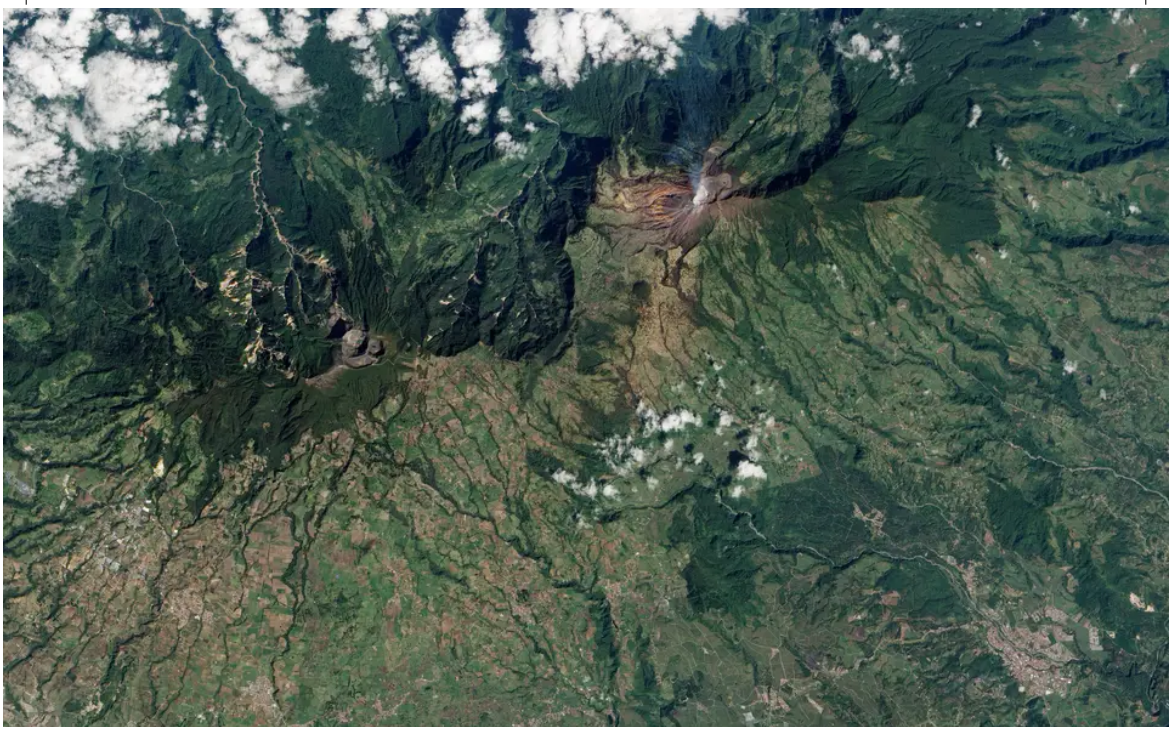
EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Irazú volcano and Orosí valley tour — roughly €70 a person
- [ ] Orosí coffee tour — roughly €30 a person

HOTEL

- [ ] Coffee Pickers Village By Hacienda Orosi · 3★
  Paraiso
- [ ] Montaña Linda Guest House Orosi · 3★
  400 meteres South of the church Orosi center
- [ ] Hotel Alma de Luna · 3★
  225 Main Road
- [ ] Hotel Reventazon · 3★
  Del BN 25 sur, 25 oeste
- [ ] Hotel Tapanti Media de Orosi · 3★

NOTES



DAY 13

Turrialba Cartago

Rafting on the Pacuare

Orosí, drive to Turrialba: about 40 km, 1 h

1 night

DON'T MISS

- The Pacuare gorge
- Guayabo, the ancient city
- Coffee farms around Turrialba

With an extra night

With an extra night: Guayabo, or a two-day raft with a night at a river lodge.

EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Pacuare river rafting — roughly €100 a person
- [ ] Guayabo with a guide — roughly €30 a person

HOTEL

- [ ] Cabaña La Montaña: Vistas increíbles y Mirador · 3★
  Quinta el Cinco, Verbena Sur
- [ ] Bella Vista Guest house · 3★
  Sitio Mata- San Rafael
- [ ] Cabaña El Ciprés: Vistas increíbles y Mirador · 3★
  Quinta el Cinco, Verbena Sur
- [ ] Guayabo Lodge · 3★
  Turrialba
- [ ] Cabaña El Manzano: Vistas increíbles y Mirador · 3★
  Verbena Sur

NOTES

What it costs

DAY	PLACE	HOTEL	TOURS	CAR	TOTAL
1	Monteverde	€110	–	€70	**€180**
2	Monteverde	€110	–	€70	**€180**
3	Rincón de la Vieja	€120	–	€70	**€190**
4	Rincón de la Vieja	€120	–	€70	**€190**
5	Bijagua	€120	–	€70	**€190**
6	Bijagua	€120	–	€70	**€190**
7	La Fortuna	€130	–	€70	**€200**
8	La Fortuna	€130	–	€70	**€200**
9	Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí	€110	–	€70	**€180**
10	Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí	€110	–	€70	**€180**
11	Orosí	€90	–	€70	**€160**
12	Orosí	€90	–	€70	**€160**
13	Turrialba	€100	–	€70	**€170**
14	Flight home from SJO	–	–	€70	**€70**

Flights	€1,800
Hotels	€1,460
Excursions	€0
Car hire	€910
Total	**€4,170**
	€2,090 a person

An estimate to plan with (prices of 2026-10): hotels, the ticked excursions, car hire and flights. No fuel or meals.

Notes

About this booklet

Made on rondreis.expert. Your trip is still there, to change and print again: costa-rica.roundtrip.expert/planner/?theme=parks

PHOTOS

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Monteverde	nature/group-birdwatching-closeup-curi-cancha-reserve-monteverde.jpg.webp · Press photo
Rincón de la Vieja	nature/family-friends-base-of-waterfall-las-chorreras-hacienda-guachipelin.jpg · Press photo
Bijagua	Ruta 6 en Cuesta Los Pichardo (1).jpg · Cuban Boy, CC0
La Fortuna	nature/la-fortuna-waterfall_01_l.jpg · Press photo
Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí	Great kiskadee in Costa Rica 01.jpg · Bernard Gagnon, CC0
Orosí	Dec2023. Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción del Rescate de Ujarrás, near Paraíso, Cartago Province, Costa Rica 03.jpg · Ridiculopathy, CC0
Turrialba	Costa Rica (14214278247).jpg · NASA Goddard Space Flight Center from Greenbelt, MD, USA, Public domain

MAP AND TYPE

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