

ROAD TRIP · COSTA RICA

# Birdwatching

*12 days · Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí – Alajuela*

ROAD TRIP · COSTA RICA

# Birdwatching

*From the lowlands of Sarapiquí to the cloud forest and the mountains: toucans, hummingbirds, macaws and the quetzal.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Length | 12 days, 11 nights |
| Distance | 630 km, 6 driving days |
| Behind the wheel | 14 h 10 min |
| Travellers | 2, 1 room, 1 car |
| Hotels | Comfort: a good hotel (3 stars) |
| Flights | Amsterdam – San José (SJO), San José (SJO) – Amsterdam |

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| **Monteverde** | Days 6–8 | **10** |
| **San Gerardo de Dota** | Days 9–10 | **12** |
| **Alajuela** | Day 11 | **14** |

# Day by day

| DAY | DATE | NIGHT | KM | DRIVE | °C |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí | 100 | 2 h | |
| 2 | | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí | | | |
| 3 | | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí | | | |
| 4 | | La Fortuna | 80 | 1 h 10 min | |
| 5 | | La Fortuna | | | |
| 6 | | Monteverde | 110 | 2 h 40 min | |
| 7 | | Monteverde | | | |
| 8 | | Monteverde | | | |
| 9 | | San Gerardo de Dota | 230 | 5 h 20 min | |
| 10 | | San Gerardo de Dota | | | |
| 11 | | Alajuela | 110 | 2 h 50 min | |
| 12 | | Flight home from SJO | 10 | 10 min | |

**630 km · 14 h 10 min behind the wheel · on average 100 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 Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí · About 100 km, 2 h |
| **Day 4** | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, drive to La Fortuna · About 80 km, 1 h 10 min |
| **Day 6** | La Fortuna, drive to Monteverde · About 110 km, 2 h 40 min |
| **Day 9** | Monteverde, drive to San Gerardo de Dota · About 230 km, 5 h 20 min |
| **Day 11** | San Gerardo de Dota, drive to Alajuela · About 110 km, 2 h 50 min |
| **Day 12** | Alajuela to San José airport (SJO), fly home to Amsterdam · About 10 km, 10 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 1–3

# Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí Heredia

*Toucans and poison dart frogs at La Selva*

Land at San José (SJO), drive to Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí: about 100 km, 2 h

**3 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 4–5

# La Fortuna Alajuela

*The cone of Arenal volcano*

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

## NOTES



DAYS 6–8

# Monteverde Puntarenas

*Walking in the cloud forest*

La Fortuna, drive to Monteverde: about 110 km, 2 h 40 min

**3 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

## NOTES



DAYS 9–10

# San Gerardo de Dota San José

*The quetzal in the oak forests*

Monteverde, drive to San Gerardo de Dota: about 230 km, 5 h 20 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- Looking for quetzals at sunrise
- The Savegre waterfall
- The top of Cerro de la Muerte

SAN GERARDO DE DOTA · DAYS 9–10

**With an extra night**

With an extra night: trout fishing on the Savegre, or hiking in Los Quetzales.

## EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Quetzal tour with a guide — roughly €50 a person
- [ ] Highland bird walk — roughly €50 a person

## HOTEL

- [ ] Entre Árboles Lodge · 3★
  San Gerardo de Dota, Chalet Amauleza
- [ ] Miriam'S Quetzals lodge · 3★
  san gerardo de dota 3 kilometros de la entrada principal en minimarket vista del cerro
- [ ] Hotel de Montaña Suria · 3★
  San Gerardo de Dota

## NOTES



DAY 11

# Alajuela Alajuela

*Poás crater, an hour from the airport*

San Gerardo de Dota, drive to Alajuela: about 110 km, 2 h 50 min

1 night

DON'T MISS

- Poás volcano crater
- La Paz waterfall gardens
- Coffee farm in the hills of Alajuela

**With an extra night**

With an extra night: La Paz waterfall gardens, or a day in San José with the Gold Museum and the Mercado Central.

## EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Central Valley coffee tour — roughly €40 a person
- [ ] Poás volcano guided tour — roughly €80 a person

## HOTEL

- [ ] Casa Cafetal Aeropuerto Two Bedrooms · 3★
  Paso Flores Calle 11
- [ ] Hotel Bamboo Aeropuerto · 3★
  Ave 1, Calles 9-11
- [ ] Las Carmelas, Airport Juan Santamaría, Alajuela, San José · 3★
  C. La Haya
- [ ] Hildas Bed and Breakfast · 3★
  Av 2 Alfaro Ruíz
- [ ] Hostal Casa Azul · 3★
  100 este de Correos de Costa Rica

## NOTES

# What it costs

| DAY | PLACE | HOTEL | TOURS | CAR | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí | €110 | – | €70 | **€180** |
| 2 | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí | €110 | – | €70 | **€180** |
| 3 | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí | €110 | – | €70 | **€180** |
| 4 | La Fortuna | €130 | – | €70 | **€200** |
| 5 | La Fortuna | €130 | – | €70 | **€200** |
| 6 | Monteverde | €110 | – | €70 | **€180** |
| 7 | Monteverde | €110 | – | €70 | **€180** |
| 8 | Monteverde | €110 | – | €70 | **€180** |
| 9 | San Gerardo de Dota | €130 | – | €70 | **€200** |
| 10 | San Gerardo de Dota | €130 | – | €70 | **€200** |
| 11 | Alajuela | €110 | – | €70 | **€180** |
| 12 | Flight home from SJO | – | – | €70 | **€70** |

| | |
|---|---|
| Flights | €1,800 |
| Hotels | €1,290 |
| Excursions | €0 |
| Car hire | €780 |
| **Total** | **€3,870** |
| | €1,940 a person |

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

# Notes

# Notes

# Notes

# Notes

# Notes

# About this booklet

Made on rondreis.expert. Your trip is still there, to change and print again: costa-rica.roundtrip.expert/tours/birds-of-costa-rica/

## PHOTOS

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí** | Great kiskadee in Costa Rica 01.jpg · Bernard Gagnon, CC0 |
| **La Fortuna** | nature/la-fortuna-waterfall_01_l.jpg · Press photo |
| **Monteverde** | nature/group-birdwatching-closeup-curi-cancha-reserve-monteverde.jpg.webp · Press photo |
| **San Gerardo de Dota** | animals/2016_06-JUNIO-03_CC_ICT_RUTA-AVES_DOTA_0196-4500x3003.jpg · Press photo |
| **Alajuela** | Piaya cayana, Costa Rica.jpg · Hobbyfotowiki, CC0 |

## MAP AND TYPE

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THE ROUTE

*Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí (3) · La Fortuna (2) · Monteverde (3) · San Gerardo de Dota (2) · Alajuela (1)*

From the lowlands of Sarapiquí to the cloud forest and the mountains: toucans, hummingbirds, macaws and the quetzal.

**12 days · 11 nights · 630 km**