

ROAD TRIP · COSTA RICA

Surfing the south

9 days · Jacó — Manuel Antonio

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Jacó and Playa Hermosa, then the powerful waves of Dominical, with whales at Uvita and monkeys at Manuel Antonio.

Length	9 days, 8 nights
Distance	400 km, 4 driving days
Behind the wheel	8 h
Travellers	2, 1 room, 1 car
Hotels	Comfort: a good hotel (3 stars)
Flights	Amsterdam – San José (SJO), San José (SJO) – Amsterdam

CONTENTS

Jacó	Days 1–2	**6**
Dominical	Days 3–6	**8**
Manuel Antonio	Days 7–8	**10**

Day by day

DAY	DATE	NIGHT	KM	DRIVE	°C
1		Jacó	90	1 h 40 min	
2		Jacó			
3		Dominical	110	2 h	
4		Dominical			
5		Dominical			
6		Dominical			
7		Manuel Antonio	50	1 h 10 min	
8		Manuel Antonio			
9		Flight home from SJO	160	3 h 10 min	

400 km · 8 h 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 Jacó · About 90 km, 1 h 40 min
Day 3	Jacó, drive to Dominical · About 110 km, 2 h
Day 7	Dominical, drive to Manuel Antonio · About 50 km, 1 h 10 min
Day 9	Manuel Antonio to San José airport (SJO), fly home to Amsterdam · About 160 km, 3 h 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

Crocodiles below the Tárcoles bridge

DAYS 1–2

Jacó Puntarenas

Crocodiles below the Tárcoles bridge

Land at San José (SJO), drive to Jacó: about 90 km, 1 h 40 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- Crocodiles at the Tárcoles bridge
- Scarlet macaws in Carara
- The surf beaches of Jacó and Playa Hermosa

With an extra night

With an extra night: early to Carara for the macaws, or a surf lesson at Playa Hermosa.

EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Tárcoles river crocodile tour — roughly €40 a person
- [ ] Jacó surf lesson — roughly €60 a person

HOTEL

- [ ] Tuanis Aparthotel · 3★
  Calle Sol de Oro, 60111 Jacó, Costa Rica
- [ ] Villa Creole · 3★
  Calle Europa 20
- [ ] Bamboo Boutique Hotel · 3★
  Avenida Amapola
- [ ] Monte Carlo Luxury Condominiums · 3★ — roughly €500
  Jaco Beach Downtown
- [ ] The Backyard Hotel · 3★
  Playa Hermosa

NOTES

Powerful waves on the Costa Ballena

DAYS 3–6

Dominical Puntarenas

Powerful waves on the Costa Ballena

Jacó, drive to Dominical: about 110 km, 2 h

4 nights

DON'T MISS

- Dominical beach
- Nauyaca waterfalls
- Dominicalito for beginners

With an extra night

With an extra night: on horseback to the Nauyaca waterfalls, or the whales of Marino Ballena.

EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Dominical surf lesson — roughly €60 a person
- [ ] Nauyaca waterfalls on horseback — roughly €80 a person

HOTEL

- [ ] Villas Alturas · 3★
  San Martin Norte
- [ ] Hotel Villas Rio Mar · 3★
  800 meters northeast of the Dominical entrance
- [ ] Tribe Boutique Hotel - Adults Only · 3★
  Tribe Boutique Hotel, Dominical Costa Rica 50 meters south of the school, next to ICE
- [ ] Hotel Tropical Sands Dominical · 3★
  Quality Road - 75 Metres Sur y 75 Este Restaurante El Coco Frente Cool Vibes y Soda y Ensuenos (Montanas de Agua)
- [ ] Rio Lindo Hotel · 3★
  Entering Dominical after 50 meters on the right

NOTES



DAYS 7–8

Manuel Antonio Puntarenas

Sloths and monkeys above white bays

Dominical, drive to Manuel Antonio: about 50 km, 1 h 10 min

2 nights

DON'T MISS

- Manuel Antonio National Park
- Espadilla beach
- Sunset over the Pacific

With an extra night

With an extra night: a catamaran along the coast, or kayaking in the Damas mangroves.

EXCURSIONS

- [ ] Manuel Antonio with a nature guide — roughly €60 a person
- [ ] Catamaran cruise with snorkelling — roughly €90 a person
- [ ] Mangrove kayak tour — roughly €70 a person

HOTEL

- [ ] Apto Cielo Azul · 3★
  Playa Manuel Antonio, 100 metro oeste entrada Parque Nacional
- [ ] Hotel Playa Espadilla · 3★
  Manuel Antonio 200 metros oeste del Parque Nacional
- [ ] Mango Moon Villa · 3★
  200 Oeste del Hotel La Mariposa
- [ ] Hotel Planeta Sano · 3★
  Hotel California Road
- [ ] Natural Pacific Suites, private family rooms · 3★
  https://goo.gl/maps/15WX22dzy1m2DbFbA

NOTES

What it costs

DAY	PLACE	HOTEL	TOURS	CAR	TOTAL
1	Jacó	€110	–	€70	**€180**
2	Jacó	€110	–	€70	**€180**
3	Dominical	€120	–	€70	**€190**
4	Dominical	€120	–	€70	**€190**
5	Dominical	€120	–	€70	**€190**
6	Dominical	€120	–	€70	**€190**
7	Manuel Antonio	€160	–	€70	**€230**
8	Manuel Antonio	€160	–	€70	**€230**
9	Flight home from SJO	–	–	€70	**€70**

Flights	€1,800
Hotels	€1,020
Excursions	€0
Car hire	€590
Total	**€3,410**
	€1,700 a person

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

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About this booklet

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

PHOTOS

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Manuel Antonio landscapes/manuel-antonio-national-park_03_l.jpg · Press photo

MAP AND TYPE

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THE ROUTE

Jacó (2) · Dominical (4) · Manuel Antonio (2)

Jacó and Playa Hermosa, then the powerful waves of Dominical, with whales at Uvita and monkeys at Manuel Antonio.

9 days · 8 nights · 400 km