

ROAD TRIP · COSTA RICA

Volcanoes and cloud forest

10 days · Orosí — Rincón de la Vieja

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Volcanoes and cloud forest

Four volcanoes in ten days: Irazú, Poás, Arenal and Rincón de la Vieja, from San José to Liberia.

Length	10 days, 9 nights
Distance	420 km, 5 driving days
Behind the wheel	8 h 50 min
Travellers	2, 1 room, 1 car
Hotels	Comfort: a good hotel (3 stars)
Flights	Amsterdam – San José (SJO), Liberia (LIR) – Amsterdam

CONTENTS

Orosí	Days 1–2	**6**
Alajuela	Days 3–4	**8**
La Fortuna	Days 5–7	**10**
Rincón de la Vieja	Days 8–9	**12**

Day by day

DAY	DATE	NIGHT	KM	DRIVE	°C
1		Orosí	60	1 h 10 min	
2		Orosí			
3		Alajuela	60	1 h 10 min	
4		Alajuela			
5		La Fortuna	120	2 h 30 min	
6		La Fortuna			
7		La Fortuna			
8		Rincón de la Vieja	140	2 h 50 min	
9		Rincón de la Vieja			
10		Flight home from LIR	40	1 h	

420 km · 8 h 50 min behind the wheel · on average 80 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 Orosí · About 60 km, 1 h 10 min
Day 3	Orosí, drive to Alajuela · About 60 km, 1 h 10 min
Day 5	Alajuela, drive to La Fortuna · About 120 km, 2 h 30 min
Day 8	La Fortuna, drive to Rincón de la Vieja · About 140 km, 2 h 50 min
Day 10	Rincón de la Vieja to Liberia airport (LIR), fly home to Amsterdam · About 40 km, 1 h

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

Orosí Cartago

On Irazú volcano, above the clouds

Land at San José (SJO), drive to Orosí: about 60 km, 1 h 10 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★

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DAYS 3–4

Alajuela Alajuela

Poás crater, an hour from the airport

Orosí, drive to Alajuela: about 60 km, 1 h 10 min

2 nights

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

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DAYS 5–7

La Fortuna Alajuela

The cone of Arenal volcano

Alajuela, drive to La Fortuna: about 120 km, 2 h 30 min

3 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 8–9

Rincón de la Vieja Guanacaste

The mud pots and fumaroles of Rincón de la Vieja

La Fortuna, drive to Rincón de la Vieja: about 140 km, 2 h 50 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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What it costs

DAY	PLACE	HOTEL	TOURS	CAR	TOTAL
1	Orosí	€90	–	€70	**€160**
2	Orosí	€90	–	€70	**€160**
3	Alajuela	€110	–	€70	**€180**
4	Alajuela	€110	–	€70	**€180**
5	La Fortuna	€130	–	€70	**€200**
6	La Fortuna	€130	–	€70	**€200**
7	La Fortuna	€130	–	€70	**€200**
8	Rincón de la Vieja	€120	–	€70	**€190**
9	Rincón de la Vieja	€120	–	€70	**€190**
10	Flight home from LIR	–	–	€70	**€70**

Flights	€1,800
Hotels	€1,030
Excursions	€0
Car hire	€650
Total	**€3,480**
	€1,740 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

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PHOTOS

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Orosí	Dec2023. Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción del Rescate de Ujarrás, near Paraíso, Cartago Province, Costa Rica 03.jpg · Ridiculopathy, CC0
Alajuela	Piaya cayana, Costa Rica.jpg · Hobbyfotowiki, CC0
La Fortuna	nature/la-fortuna-waterfall_01_l.jpg · Press photo
Rincón de la Vieja	nature/family-friends-base-of-waterfall-las-chorreras-hacienda-guachipelin.jpg · Press photo

MAP AND TYPE

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THE ROUTE

Orosí (2) · Alajuela (2) · La Fortuna (3) · Rincón de la Vieja (2)

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10 days · 9 nights · 420 km

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