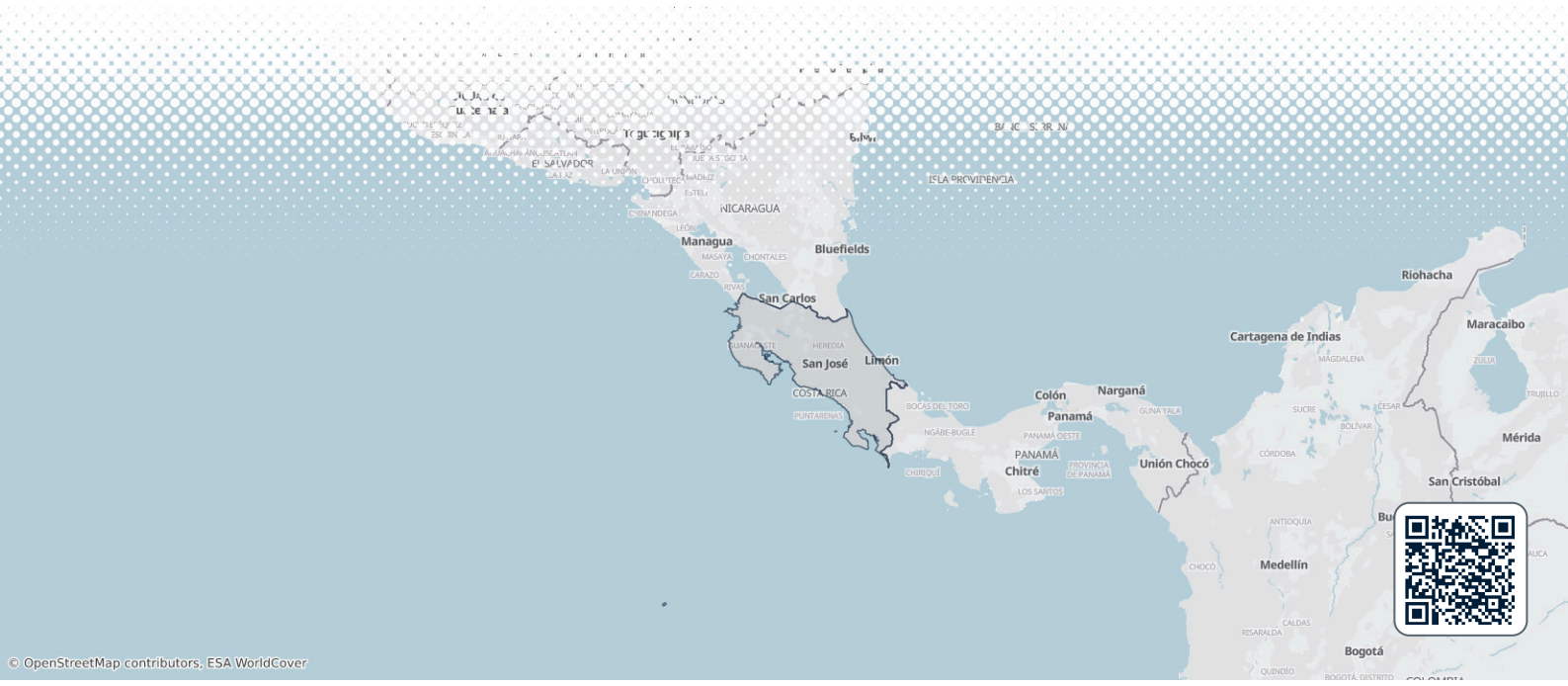


Costa Rica

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Costa Rica is a small Central American country between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. It is known for its rainforests, volcanoes, and beaches, and for the amount of wildlife packed into a small area. The country abolished its military in 1948, an event still celebrated as Army Abolition Day, and that choice is closely tied to its identity as a peaceful, nature-focused destination.

The landscape changes fast over short distances. Active volcanoes and cloud forests fill the central highlands, while the Pacific and Caribbean coasts each have their own beach towns, wildlife, and pace of life. Around a quarter of the country is protected as national parks or reserves. Costa Rica suits travelers who want to combine outdoor adventure — hiking, surfing, wildlife watching — with comfortable places to stay and relax afterward.

Money & payments

Costa Rica's currency is the colón, but US dollars are accepted almost everywhere — hotels, tour operators, and many restaurants price in both. Change is often given in colones, so carry small bills of both currencies if you can.

Currency

CURRENCY	1 CRC	1 CRC
₡	0.001996 EUR	0.002225 USD
CRC	1 EUR = 501.01 CRC	1 USD = 449.35 CRC

Cards accepted in major venues

ATMs are common in cities and tourist towns. Cash still matters outside those areas: national park entrance fees, small rural sodas, and local buses may not take cards. Withdraw colones for these before heading into remote areas.

Typical costs

Rough prices in touristic areas, per person

Hotel (double room, per night) mid-range hotel, double room	35,000 – 70,000 ₡ €70 – €140
Dinner (mid-range restaurant) mid-range restaurant, one person	8,000 – 15,000 ₡ €16 – €30
Inexpensive meal casado at a local soda	3,000 – 5,000 ₡ €6 – €10
Local beer	1,500 – 2,500 ₡ €3 – €5
Coffee	1,200 – 2,000 ₡ €2 – €4
Water bottled water, 500ml	700 – 1,200 ₡ €1 – €2
Transit ticket local bus fare	400 – 700 ₡ €1 – €1
Taxi (per km) official red taxi, metered	600 – 700 ₡ €1 – €1

Tipping

A 10% service charge and 13% tax are added to restaurant bills by law, so tipping beyond that is optional and only for exceptional service. Tour guides are the exception: a daily tip is customary and appreciated.

Restaurant 10% service charge already included by law; extra only for exceptional service	Optional
Hotel small amount for porters/housekeeping	Optional
Taxi round up the fare	Not customary
Tour guide $5-10 per person per day	Expected
Bar	Not customary

Round up for taxis rather than calculating a percentage. Hotel porters and housekeeping appreciate a small tip, though it is not required.

Electricity

Costa Rica uses Type A/B plugs at 120 V / 60 Hz, the same as the United States — travelers from North America won't need an adapter.

ELECTRICITY



Type A

ELECTRICITY



Type B

120 V · 60 Hz

Language

Spanish is the official language. English is widely spoken in hotels, tour operations, and restaurants in the main tourist areas — Guanacaste, the Arenal region, and the coasts — but far less so in small inland towns. A few basic Spanish phrases go a long way outside the main tourist circuit.

Useful phrases

Hello	Hola
Goodbye	Adiós
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Gracias
Yes	Sí
No	No
Excuse me	Disculpe
Sorry	Perdón
How much?	¿Cuánto cuesta?
Where is...?	¿Dónde está?
Help	Ayuda
Cheers	Salud

Staying connected

Prepaid SIM and eSIM plans from Kölbi, Liberty, and Claro are easy to buy at the airport or in shops in almost any town; bring your passport to activate one. Coverage is strong along the main tourist routes but can drop out in remote national parks and on mountain roads.

Safety & emergencies

Costa Rica is generally safe for tourists, but petty theft — bag snatching, car break-ins, distraction theft — is the most common problem, especially in San José, at beaches, and around rental car parking areas. Don't leave valuables visible in a parked car, and keep an eye on bags at bus stations and beaches.

Emergency numbers

GENERAL EMERGENCY	POLICE	AMBULANCE	FIRE BRIGADE
911	112	112	112

Rip currents are a real risk at many Pacific beaches. Swim only where lifeguards or locals are present, and ask about conditions before going in.

Health

Tap water is safe to drink in San José and most towns; in very remote areas, bottled or filtered water is the safer choice. Pharmacies (*farmacias*) are common and well-stocked, and many sell over-the-counter versions of medicines that need a prescription elsewhere.

No vaccinations are required for entry, but a yellow fever certificate is required if you're arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Mosquito-borne illnesses such as dengue exist in lowland and coastal areas — use repellent, especially during and right after the rainy season.

Visas & entry

Citizens of the US, Canada, the EU, the UK, and most Latin American countries can enter Costa Rica visa-free for a non-extendable stay of up to 180 days, with a passport valid for the length of the stay. Proof of onward or return travel is sometimes requested at the border.

Travelers who need a visa can apply at a Costa Rican consulate before arrival.

> Visa and entry requirements change frequently. Verify current requirements with the official immigration authority or your country's embassy before travel.

Etiquette

Costa Ricans, known as *Ticos*, use the phrase "**Pura vida**" for everything from "hello" and "goodbye" to "everything's fine" — it sums up the country's relaxed, easygoing culture. Greetings are warm; a handshake is standard, and friends often greet with a light cheek kiss.

Casual dress is fine almost everywhere, including many restaurants. Swimwear is for the beach or pool only — cover up when walking through towns. Punctuality is relaxed outside business meetings, so don't be surprised if plans run on "Tico time."

Holidays & opening hours

Public holidays affect transport and business hours: many shops and offices close, and buses run on reduced schedules. Semana Santa, the week before Easter, is the most disruptive — expect closures and busy roads as Ticos travel.

Public holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day
Apr 11	Juan Santamaría Day
May 1	Labour Day
Jul 25	Annexation of the Party of Nicoya to Costa Rica
Aug 2	Feast of Our Lady of the Angels
Aug 15	Mother's Day
Sep 15	Independence Day
Dec 1	Army Abolition Day
Dec 25	Christmas Day
movable — Mar/Apr	Good Friday
movable — Mar/Apr	Maundy Thursday

Shops in cities typically open Monday to Saturday and close by early evening; many close or reduce hours on Sundays. Sodas, the small local eateries, tend to keep longer, more flexible hours.

Getting around

- **By air**: Domestic flights connect San José with Guanacaste (via Liberia), the Osa Peninsula (via Puerto Jiménez), and other remote areas — worth it when the drive would otherwise take most of a day on mountain roads.
- **By bus**: An extensive public bus network reaches almost every town. It's cheap but can be slow on mountain routes. Private shuttle services connect major tourist towns directly and cost more but save time.
- **By car**: Renting a car gives the most flexibility for reaching beaches and national parks, though many rural roads are unpaved and slow, especially in the rainy season.

Driving

- **Road conditions**: Paved highways connect the major cities, but many rural and mountain roads are unpaved, narrow, and slow — a short distance on the map can take hours. A 4x4 is worth it for trips to Monteverde, the Osa Peninsula, or Caribbean beach towns beyond Cahuita.
- **Tolls**: Cash tolls are charged at booths on a few highways, including the San José–Caldera route and sections near the capital — keep small colones bills handy. There is no nationwide vignette.
- **Parking**: Guarded lots (*parqueos*) are common in cities and at trailheads. Street parking is often watched informally by attendants (*guachimanes*) who expect a small tip.
- **Fuel**: Stations are staffed, not self-service, and take cash or card. Pumps are labeled **Súper** and **Regular** for petrol and **Diésel** for diesel.
- **Rental cars**: Mandatory local insurance, on top of your own coverage, is a standard extra cost added at pickup — factor it into your budget when comparing quoted prices.

URBAN	RURAL	MOTORWAY
50 km/h	80 km/h	100 km/h

PETROL	DIESEL
Súper, Regular	Diésel

Drive on the right

No motorway vignette needed

Several highways charge cash tolls at booths, including the San José–Caldera route (Ruta 27) and stretches near the capital — a few hundred to around a thousand colones per booth. Keep small colones bills on hand; there is no nationwide vignette.

Food & drink

Costa Ricans typically start the day with **gallo pinto** — rice and beans fried together, usually served with eggs, cheese, and fried plantain. Lunch is the main meal for many locals: a *casado* plate of rice, beans, salad, plantain, and a choice of meat or fish, often eaten at a small local eatery called a soda. Dinner tends to be lighter, sometimes a smaller version of the same dishes.

Street food and snacks lean on corn and fried plantain: chifrijo (fried pork, rice, beans, and salsa, often served at bars), tamales around the holidays, and patacones (fried plantain) as a side almost everywhere. Fresh fruit juices, called *frescos naturales*, are sold everywhere, blended from tropical fruit with water or milk. Coffee is a point of national pride — Costa Rica grows some of the world's best arabica, though the highest-grade export beans can be easier to find in specialty cafés than at a hotel breakfast.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Gallo pinto · gallo pinto
Rice and beans fried together, the everyday breakfast, usually served with eggs and fried plantain.

LUNCH

Casado · casado
A plate of rice, beans, salad, plantain, and a choice of meat or fish; the standard lunch at a soda.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Chifrijo · chifrijo
Fried pork, rice, beans, and pico de gallo, often served at bars with tortilla chips.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Tres leches cake · tres leches
A sponge cake soaked in three kinds of milk, a common dessert at celebrations.

DRINKS

Fresco natural · fresco natural
A fresh fruit drink blended with water or milk, sold everywhere from street stalls to restaurants.

Costa Rican coffee · café
High-quality arabica coffee; Costa Rica is known for its coffee-growing regions in the central highlands.

Imperial beer · Imperial
The best-known Costa Rican beer, a light lager found in most bars and restaurants.

Costa Rica – Plan Your Trip

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Where to explore

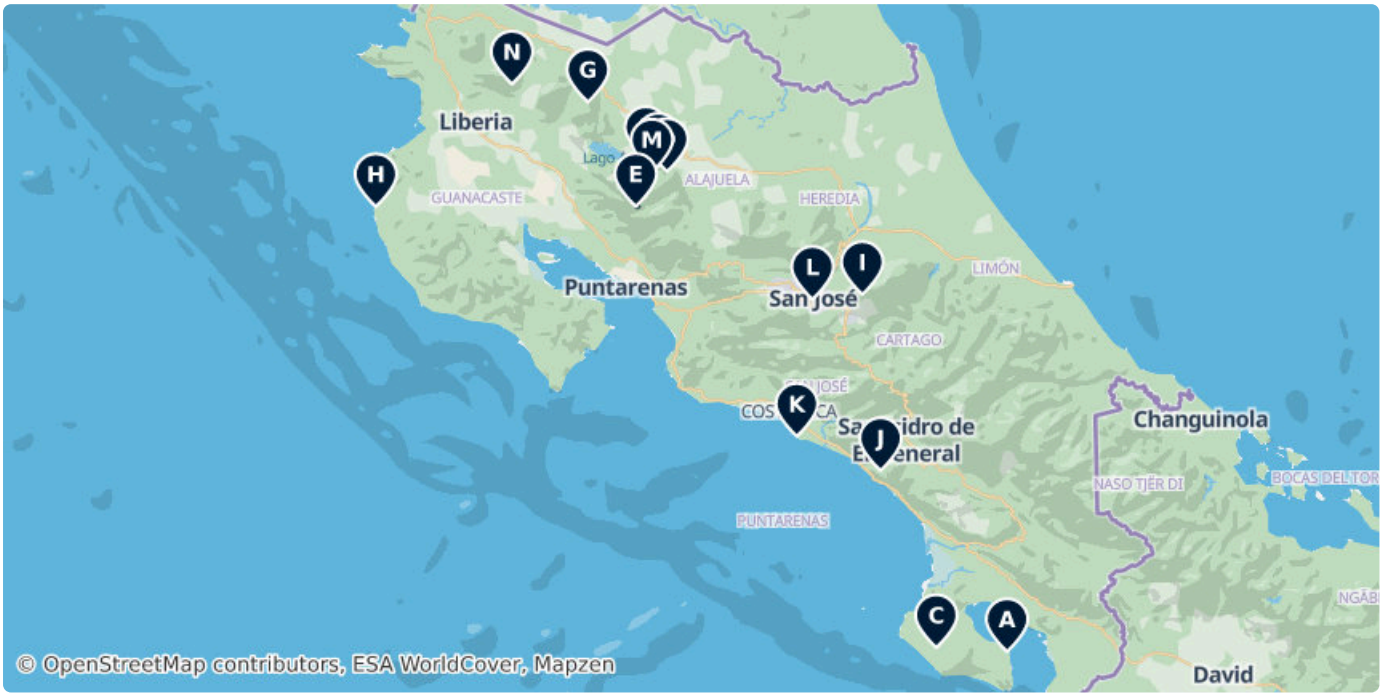
Most visits start in San José, the capital, with its markets, museums, and the ornate National Theatre of Costa Rica. Nearby Cartago was the country's colonial capital and holds its most important pilgrimage church, at the foot of Irazú Volcano.

The northern lowlands center on La Fortuna, the base for hiking, hot springs, and views of Arenal Volcano, and on the cloud forests around Reserva Monteverde near Santa Elena. In the northwest, Liberia is the gateway to Costa Rica's driest region and its most developed beach resorts, centered on Tamarindo.

Further south, Quepos is the gateway to Manuel Antonio National Park, one of the country's most visited protected areas, while remote Puerto Jiménez on the Osa Peninsula serves Corcovado National Park's rainforest. Puntarenas is the main port for ferries to the Nicoya Peninsula. On the Caribbean coast, Cahuita has a laid-back, Afro-Caribbean culture distinct from the rest of the country, with a coral reef just offshore.

Costa Rica's Absolute Essentials

This collection features Costa Rica's most significant natural landmarks and cultural hubs. It includes the active Arenal and Irazú volcanoes, the biodiverse Corcovado National Park, and the Monteverde cloud forest. Coastal highlights range from the surfing waters of Tamarindo to the white sands of Manuel Antonio. Visitors can explore the 19th-century San José Central Market for local goods or trek to the Rio Fortuna and Nauyaca waterfalls. These sites represent the country's diverse ecosystems, from volcanic peaks to tropical rainforests and marine habitats.



A Jardin Botanico Herrera

Private botanical garden and nature reserve near Golfito, featuring diverse tropical plant species and local wildlife in a preserved rainforest setting.

Calle Playa Platanares, Puerto Jiménez, Pueblo Viejo, 61301 Costa Rica (8.53413, -83.29839)



B Arenal Volcano

An active andesitic stratovolcano in northwestern Costa Rica. It rises 1,633 meters above sea level and is characterized by its near-perfect conical shape and proximity to Lake Arenal.

Costa Rica (10.46208, -84.70341)

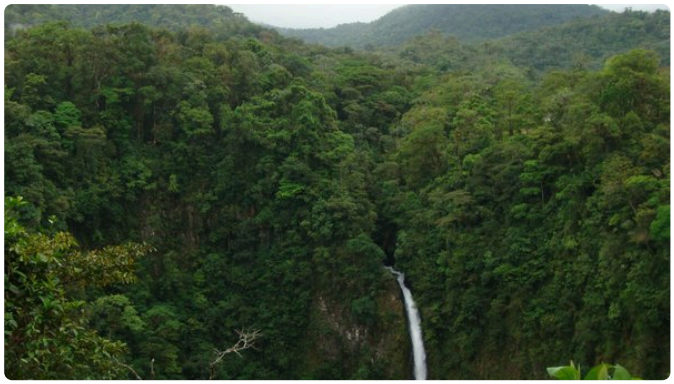


C Corcovado National Park

Corcovado National Park is a National Park on the Osa Peninsula, in Osa Canton, located on the southwestern regions of Costa Rica, which is...

Costa Rica (8.55000, -83.58333)

corcovado.com/places-to-visit/corcovado-national-park.ht...



D Rio Fortuna Waterfall viewpoint

La Fortuna Waterfall is in central Costa Rica, in the Alajuela Province. In Spanish, it is known as Catarata Fortuna.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (10.44115, -84.66804)

Mo–Su 07:00–17:00

cataratalafortuna.com

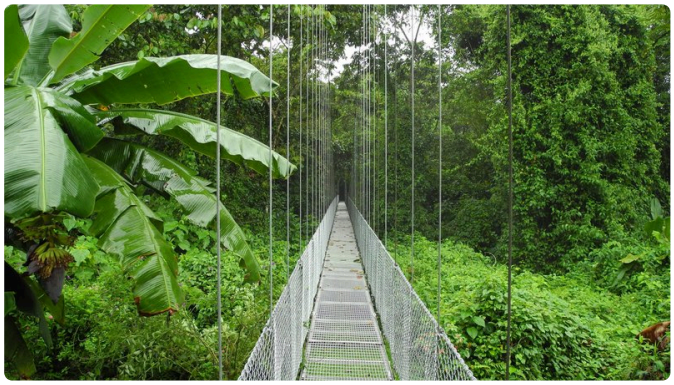


E Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

A 10,500-hectare biological reserve protecting one of the world's most famous cloud forests. It is home to thousands of plant species and rare wildlife like the resplendent quetzal.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (10.30261, -84.79480)

cloudforestmonteverde.com



F Arenal Hanging Bridges

A series of suspension bridges and trails through the rainforest canopy near the Arenal Volcano, providing elevated views of the forest floor and volcanic landscape.

Calle Sangregado, La Fortuna (10.48805, -84.75378)

misticopark.com



G Park Entrance Rio Celeste

The entry point to Tenorio Volcano National Park, leading to the river known for its distinct turquoise color caused by a chemical reaction of volcanic minerals.

Bijagua (10.71580, -84.98729)

Mo–Su 08:00–14:00

sinac.go.cr/ES/ac/acat/pnvt/Paginas/default.aspx



H Tamarindo Beach

This beach, together with other surrounding beaches, forms a unique bay.

Costa Rica (10.30161, -85.84162)



I Irazu Volcano National Park

Irazú Volcano National Park, or in Spanish the Parque Nacional Volcán Irazú, is a National Park in the Central Conservation Area of Costa...

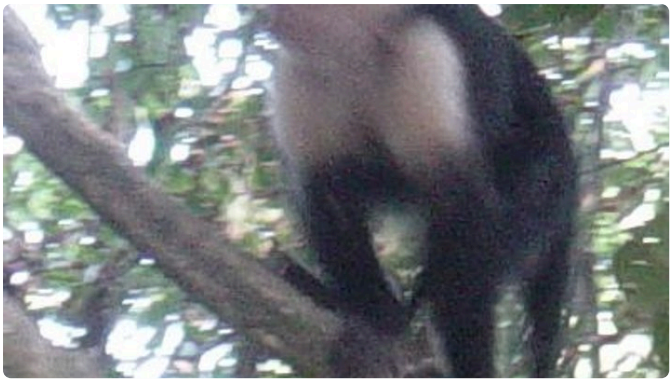
Costa Rica (9.95369, -83.88156)

costarica.com/attractions/irazu-volcano-... , +506 2551-9398

J Nauyaca Waterfalls

Two-tiered waterfalls located in a wide canyon near Dominical. The upper fall drops 45 meters, while the lower fall is 20 meters high and feeds into a large natural swimming pool.

Calle Nauyaca, Barú, 11909 Costa Rica (9.25467, -83.80818)



K National Park Manuel Antonio

Entry and information point for Costa Rica's most visited national park, which combines tropical rainforest with white-sand beaches and coral reefs.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (9.39095, -84.14525)

Mo–Su 07:00–16:00

manuelantoniopark.com



L San José Central Market

San José Central Market is the largest market of the city of San José, Costa Rica.

Avenida Central 0040, San José (9.93460, -84.08202)



M Observation deck de Volcán Arenal

A scenic lookout point offering unobstructed views of the Arenal Volcano's western slopes and the hardened lava flows from previous eruptions.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (10.43858, -84.72966)



N Rincón de la Vieja National Park

Rincón de la Vieja is an active andesitic complex volcano in north-western Costa Rica, about 23 km from Liberia, in the province of...

Costa Rica (10.78693, -85.29294)

sinac.go.cr/AC/ACG/PNRinconVieja/Pagi... , +506 2522-6500

Best Beaches of Costa Rica

Costa Rica's coastline features diverse environments, ranging from the crushed shell shore of Playa Conchal to the protected leatherback turtle nesting sites at Playa Grande. This selection includes the consistent surf breaks of Santa Teresa, the calm, horseshoe-shaped bay of Playa Sámara, and the historic fishing village atmosphere of Playas del Coco. These destinations offer opportunities for snorkeling in volcanic rock tide pools and exploring coastal trails that connect secluded coves across the Guanacaste and Nicoya regions.





A Tamarindo Beach

This beach, together with other surrounding beaches, forms a unique bay.

Costa Rica (10.30161, -85.84162)

B Playa Santa Teresa

A long stretch of white sand known for consistent year-round surf breaks and volcanic tide pools accessible at low tide.

(9.64410, -85.17089)



C Montezuma Beach

This beach is multi-purpose - you can come here for a great day of swimming or scuba diving or to experience the local nightlife.

Costa Rica (9.65575, -85.06571)

playamontezuma.net

D Playa Grande

Part of Las Baulas National Marine Park, this beach serves as a vital nesting site for leatherback turtles and is separated from Tamarindo by a mangrove estuary.

Costa Rica (10.32581, -85.84516)



E Coco Beach

Playas del Coco is one of the oldest beach communities in Guanacaste Province, Costa Rica.

Costa Rica (10.55436, -85.69805)



F Playa Conchal

A unique shoreline composed of millions of tiny crushed seashells. The clear turquoise waters provide high visibility for snorkeling over nearby rocky reefs.

Costa Rica (10.40115, -85.80706)



G Samara Beach

A crescent-shaped beach protected by an offshore coral reef that creates calm swimming conditions. The nearby Isla Chora is a frequent destination for coastal kayaking.

Costa Rica (9.87584, -85.51933)



H Hermosa Beach

This beach's name means "beautiful" in Spanish and it couldn't be more true. It is an ideal place to relax because it is not overcrowded.

Costa Rica (10.57504, -85.67960)

I Playa Agujas

A dark-sand beach characterized by calm, protected waters, making it a primary location for sea kayaking and outrigger canoe excursions.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (9.72324, -84.65272)

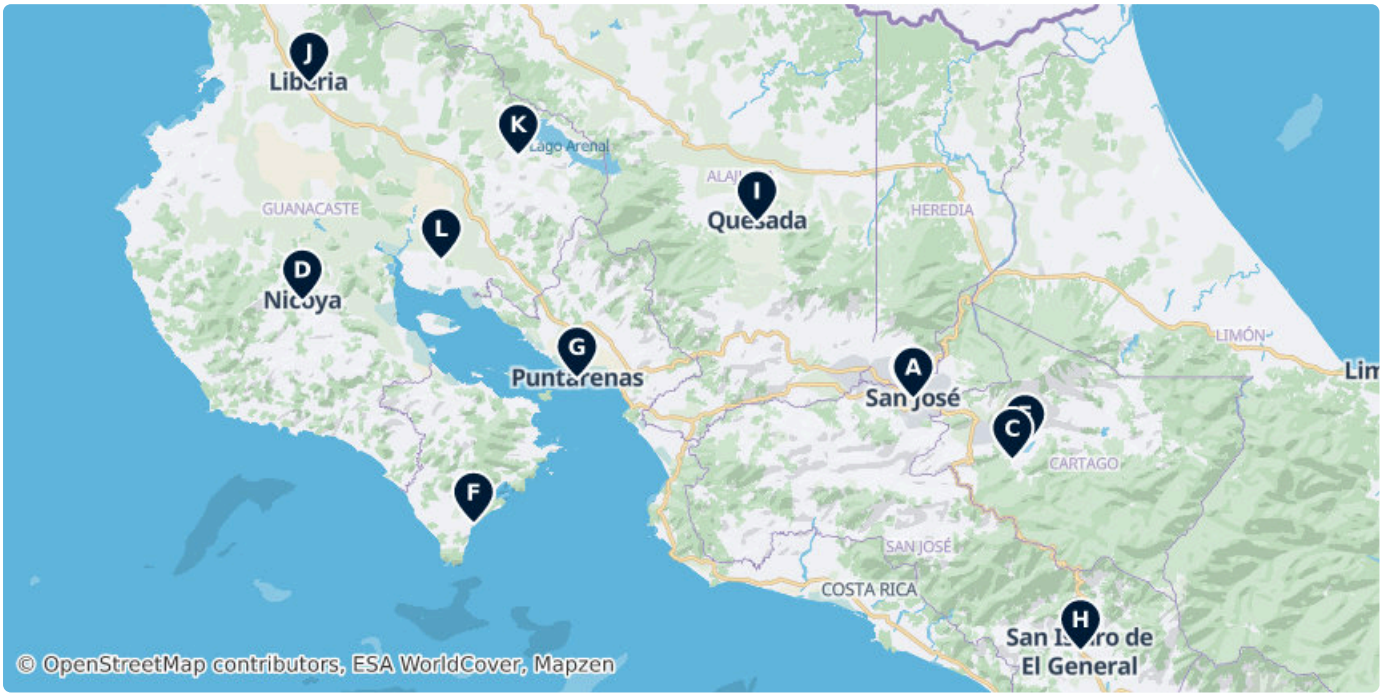
J Playa Bejuco

A wide beach recognized with the Ecological Blue Flag for cleanliness. It is known for its open ocean swells and strong currents.

Costa Rica (9.83142, -85.34569)

Historic Religious Sites

Costa Rica's religious architecture ranges from 18th-century colonial structures to bold modernist cathedrals. This collection features historical landmarks like the ruins of Ujarrás and the Colonial Church of Orosi, one of the country's oldest functioning temples. In San José, sites like the Metropolitan Cathedral showcase neoclassical and baroque influences, while regional cathedrals in Liberia and Puntarenas exhibit unique mid-20th-century concrete designs. These sites provide insight into the nation's heritage through intricate woodwork, imported stained glass, and significant colonial history.





A Metropolitan Cathedral

The original cathedral had been destroyed by an earthquake and this one replaced it. It is a mix of styles and has a nice half-cupola.

Av Segunda, San Jose, Costa Rica (9.93276, -84.07867)



B Church of Worship

This is a beautiful church with stained-glass windows and wooden ceiling. It is one of the oldest churches in San José.

Calle 10, San Jose, Costa Rica (9.93327, -84.08372)

+506 2222 3586

C Iglesia Colonial de Orosi

Built in 1743, this colonial-era church features thick adobe walls and houses a museum of religious art. It remains one of the oldest functioning temples in Costa Rica.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (9.79726, -83.85553)



D The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, often informally known as the LDS Church or Mormon Church, is a nontrinitarian, Christian...

(Unnamed Road), Nicoya, Costa Rica (10.14881, -85.45254)



E Iglesia de Ujarrás

The ruins of a 16th-century stone church, marking one of the earliest Spanish settlements in the Orosi Valley.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (9.82817, -83.82726)

F Iglesia de Montezuma

A local Catholic church serving the coastal community of Montezuma.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (9.65553, -85.06762)

G Catedral del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús

Modernist cathedral in Puntarenas featuring a unique stone exterior and sharp, angular architectural lines.

(9.97770, -84.83484)

H Catedral San Isidro Labrador

Mid-20th-century cathedral known for its colorful stained-glass windows and prominent position in San Isidro de El General.

(9.37357, -83.70226)

I Catedral San Carlos Borromeo

The principal cathedral of Ciudad Quesada and the seat of the local diocese.

(10.32326, -84.43001)

J Catedral de La Inmaculada Concepción de María

A striking modernist white cathedral in Liberia, characterized by its sharp geometric shapes and minimalist aesthetic.

(10.63003, -85.43747)

K Catedral San Antonio de Padua

The central cathedral for the Diocese of Tilarán-Liberia, featuring a traditional bell tower.

(10.47028, -84.96700)

L Iglesia de Concepción (La Concha)

Roman Catholic parish church located in the Guanacaste province.

(Unnamed Road), Costa Rica (10.23977, -85.14033)

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