

Itinerary for 13D12N Costa Rica and Panama

Day 1 San Jose

Hola! Welcome to Costa Rica!

Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6:00pm on Day 1.

With over half the country's population living within its parameters, San Jose is a bustling city with lively markets, intriguing museums and a dynamic atmosphere. A good place to start exploring is the main plaza, a fantastic place to get comfy and do some people watching. Artisan booths are common here and you never know when there'll be a spontaneous art fair. Have a look at the Gold Museum which has an amazing collection of indigenous gold art. If these cultural gems get you in the mood for a bit of shopping head to the outdoor market in Plaza de la Cultura or the Central Market where you can buy anything from handicrafts to seafood.

Optional Activities

- San Jose - Irazu Volcano, Orosi Valley, Lankester garden full day tour - USD80
- San Jose - National Museum - USD7
- San Jose - Poas National Park half day tour - USD46
- San Jose - Poas Volcano National Park, Doka Coffee Tour & La Paz Waterfalls full day tour - USD96
- San Jose - Gold Museum - USD11
- San Jose - Jade Museum - USD10

Accommodation: Hotel (1 nt)

Days 2-4 Puerto Viejo de Talamanca

Today we travel by local bus to Puerto Viejo (approx 5 hrs).

A small town on the beautiful Caribbean coast, Puerto Viejo de Talamanca has two sides to it. The main street has a party vibe with dancehall and reggaeton bars and modern restaurants. Off the main street you'll find great surf beaches, rainforest fruit farms, and family homes. The culture here is a real mix of Rastafarian, European and indigenous populations.

Cahuita National Park is easily accessible from Puerto Viejo, and there are good opportunities here to spot sloths, monkeys, raccoons, snakes and a great variety of birds. Entrance to the park is free, although you will be asked for a donation.

Optional Activities

- Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Bicycle rental (per day) - USD5
- Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Cahuita National Park - USD2
- Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Kekoldi Iguana Reserve - USD4
- Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Jaguar Rescue Center - USD15
- Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Surf lesson (1hrs) - USD25

Accommodation: Hotel (3nts)

Day 5-7 Isla Bastimentos/Bocas del Toro

Today we travel across the border to Panama. We travel by colectivo to the border, then walk across an old railway bridge into Panama. We then continue by colectivo to Almirante where we take the local ferry to Isla Bastimentos in the Bocas del Toro archipelago.

In Bocas del Toro we stay on Isla Bastimentos. This island has a more laidback vibe, with palm-fringed beaches, sea turtle nesting grounds, mangrove islands and coral reefs. There are no roads or cars here - walking or water taxi are your transport options.

The main town is called Old Bank, home to a population of a couple of hundred people, and consisting of just a walking path lined with buildings.

Optional Activities

- Bocas del Toro - Snorkelling tour (full day) - USD45
- Bocas del Toro - Oreba Cocoa Farm Indigenous tour - USD45
- Bocas del Toro - Star beach (Transport) - USD15
- Bocas del Toro - Red Frog Beach (Transport & Entrance) - USD13
- Bocas del Toro - Sea kayaking – Free
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Accommodation: Hotel (3 nts)

Days 8-9 Boquete

Today we travel by boat and local buses to Boquete (approx 8-9 hrs).

Boquete is a small, picturesque mountain village, located in a valley in the Panama highlands. The main attractions of the area are the surrounding natural highlights such as mountains, crystal clear creeks and rivers, forest reserves, stunning displays of wildflowers, and fauna such as howler monkeys and the resplendent quetzal. Nearby is Panama's highest point, Volcan Baru, from the top of which it is possible to see both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Activities here include hiking, canopy tours, kayaking, river rafting and zip lining. This is also an area famous for its coffee and while here you can visit a coffee plantation, or kick back in town trying some of the local brew.

Optional Activities

- Boquete - Calderas hot springs - USD25
- Boquete - Zipline tour - USD45
- Boquete - Coffee Plantation tour - USD25
- Boquete - Guided bicycle tour - USD55
- Boquete - Rock climbing - USD40
- Boquete - Guided tour of hidden waterfalls - USD35
- Boquete - Mini canyons - USD30
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Accommodation: Hotel (2 nts)

Day 10-11 Santa Catalina

Today we travel by local bus to Santa Catalina, on the Pacific side of Panama (approx 8 hrs).

The fishing village of Santa Catalina is still a very remote, undeveloped destination and one of the best sites for surfing in Central America. Aside from surfing, the main pastime in Santa Catalina is relaxing, preferably in a hammock. If you'd like to be more active, perhaps take a trip out to Coiba National Marine Park, where you can snorkel with turtles, angel rays, and schools of colourful fish.

Optional Activities

- Santa Catalina - Surf lesson - USD25
- Santa Catalina - Coiba Island & Grano de Oro Snorkelling Tour - USD60
- Santa Catalina - Fishing tour (half day) - USD45
- Santa Catalina - Surf board rental (per day) - USD15

Day 12-13 Panama City

Today we travel by local bus to Panama City (6 hrs. approx).

As there's a great deal to do in Panama City we recommend staying a few extra days to make the most of this exciting city. If you need help booking extra accommodation, our reservations team will be happy to assist. If you are extending your stay, perhaps explore the historic Casco Viejo, or old town, which dates back to 1673 and is former walled city with an unusual combination of restored buildings, low-income housing, churches, and ruins. You may also like to visit the engineering marvel - the Panama Canal, head up to Cerro Ancon, the best viewpoint in Panama City, with a view of Casco Viejo, the Canal, and the modern city, or take a stroll through the rainforest within the city at the Metropolitan Nature Park. Panama City is also famous for its shopping centres with the biggest being Albrook Mall, or if you are interested in more traditional souvenirs, try the National Artisan's Market.

There are no activities planned for the final day and you are able to depart the accommodation at any time.

Optional Activities

- Panama City - Visit to the Panama Canal - USD10

Accommodation: Hotel (1 nt)

Destination Information: COSTA RICA

A longstanding enlightened approach to its natural heritage saw Costa Rica pioneering conservation when it wasn't even on the minds of many other countries. And visiting, you can see the motivation: some of the world's greatest biodiversity, with lush forests home to particularly spectacular birdlife, and good populations of animals such as caimans and monkeys. Walking the trails through parks such as Tortuguero or Monteverde is a thrilling treat, hearing the sounds of the jungle - macaws maybe, and toucans - surround you as you move through the low-lying cloud, or sighting animals such as the river turtle or three-toed sloth are unforgettable experiences.

Manuel Antonio National Park's beaches

The three-toed sloth of Manuel Antonio National Park could be forgiven for taking such a long time to move through such a beautiful environment, though it seems the other diverse wildlife remain vibrantly active without being so overcome. You'll be in awe too, but perhaps remain upright, as you walk the long stretches of beautiful white sand beach backed by lush jungle and marvel at the scenic islets off the coast. Laze on the beach or trek jungle trails, but just don't get lost while looking for the fountain of youth, the legendary spring and giver of eternal life and health Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon searched for here in 1519. He was unsuccessful, but you might get the sense it's somewhere near in this wondrous part of the world.



Meet the Bri Bri Indigenous People

The azure sea might lap the pristine white beaches of Puerto Viejo in a languid tidal wash, but your attention will soon be entirely focused on the indigenous Bri Bri inhabitants of the surrounding lowland forest -you'll be able to meet and spend time with these fascinating Amerindian people. Hunting in the forest using the local poison dart frog toxin, specialist agriculture and preparing cacao for healing, purification and medicinal purposes are some of the traditional customs still practised by the Bri Bri, though their Kekoldi cousins, whom you'll also visit, have recently begun the unique practice of iguana farming. Once you've soaked all that in you'll be rewarded with a taste of chocolate prepared using a 300 year old recipe. Better than just a day at the beach for sure.



Monteverde Cloud Forest

The altitude of the pristine tropical forest of Monteverde's Santa Elena Cloud Forest Reserve means that you'll indeed be walking through the clouds magically wreathed around some of the world's most spectacular biodiversity. You'll see some of sixty hummingbird species hovering with delicate grace amongst orchids and butterflies, and, if you're lucky, one of the forest's six species of cat. Perhaps even the Resplendent Quetzal, which you'll certainly learn about, a colourful bird and 'God of the air' that plays an important totemic role in Mesoamerican mythologies.

Rinconde la Vieja's jungle volcanoes & hot springs

A legend of the Rinconde la Vieja - a jungle region of active volcanos, waterfalls, hot springs, bubbling mud pots and steaming vents - has it that a local man threw his daughter's unsuitable lover into one of the craters. Heartbroken, the daughter became a recluse living in the mountains and slowly acquired extraordinary powers of healing. You might not meet her on your trek, but you will feel rejuvenated by the magnificent wildlife in this relatively undiscovered corner of Costa Rica, and the natural anti-stress spa treatment you'll have at the end of the day: cake yourself in hot natural mud, wait till it dries, then wash it all off in the thermal water of a jacuzzi-style pool. As the mud comes away so will any last vestige of pre-tour tension, in this spectacular National Park.

The Wildlife of Tortuguero National Park's canals

Once an archipelago of volcanic islands, the braided forest, canals and lagoons of Tortuguero National Park are incredibly biodiverse and a nature lover's dream boat cruise destination. Navigating the secondary canals by boat, you soon discover the park contains the habitat of seven species of river turtle, spectacled caiman, spider monkeys, the West Indian Manatee, sloths, iguanas and a fabulous array of colourful birds like the toucan and macaw. The park is one of the most important Caribbean nesting sites for the magnificent green sea turtle, and on your afternoon visit to the multi-coloured homes dotted through the palm trees of Tortuguero village, you'll learn of its significance and of traditional life lived in such a rich wildlife setting.