



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK COSTA RICA

14 days from **£3,750pp**

COSTA RICA / SAN JOSE, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND CENTRAL VALLEYS / SAVEGRE VALLEY AND CHIRRIPO FOOTHILLS / PACIFIC COAST / OSA PENINSULA



WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

A passion for the region runs through all we do

All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America

Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

Fully bonded and licensed

ATOL-protected

On your side when it matters

Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks

We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions

Let us show you the Latin America we know and love



OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

A Costa Rica wildlife and relaxation holiday with a difference: get off the beaten track and explore less-visited, but equally beguiling spots with excellent small eco-lodges.

DAY 1	Arrive in San José and transfer to your hotel.
DAY 2	Transfer to Turrialba via Guayabo National Monument.
DAY 3	Optional activities in Turrialba.
DAY 4	Transfer to San Gerado de Dota via Copey Estate Winery.
DAY 5	Quetzal spotting in the Cordillera Talamanca.
DAY 6	Optional activities in San Gerardo de Dota
DAY 7	Transfer to Uvita on the Pacific Coast
DAY 8	Whale watching excursion
DAY 9	Free time on the beach or explore the area.
DAY 10	Transfer to Golfito via the Terraba-Sierpe wetlands
DAYS 11 - 12	Activities at the lodge
DAY 13	Fly to San José.
DAY 14	Transfer to the airport for your international flight.

ITINERARY

For decades, Costa Rica has been a leading light in conservation, and over a quarter of its territory is protected in well-managed national parks and private nature reserves. Many parks are very popular with comprehensive tourist facilities, providing a very different experience from the remote wilderness adventure that many wildlife enthusiasts are hoping for.

On this holiday, we have selected some of our favourite national parks which, although situated in stunning locations, don't receive hordes of visitors. Among them are Los Quetzales National Park, Marino Ballena National Park, and Piedras Blancas National Park.

Accommodation is in delightfully rustic eco-lodges, usually small and family-run, which offer the opportunity to understand how real life is lived in these bucolic areas. You'll have the opportunity to participate in optional or included activities, from wildlife-spotting to coffee tours.

There's no better way to see Costa Rica's varied landscape unfold than by travelling overland. To complement these journeys, we've included a variety of rewarding stop-offs, including an archaeological site and a vineyard.

DAY 1

Arrive in San José and transfer to your hotel.

You'll be met at the airport by our local representative who will take you to your hotel in Costa Rica's modern capital.

DAY 2

Transfer to Turrialba via Guayabo National Monument.

From San José, it's a two-hour drive east to Turrialba. En route you'll have the opportunity to visit the Guayabo National Monument, the largest pre-Columbian ruins to be discovered in Costa Rica to date.

Although not as grand as other well-known archaeological sites in Latin America, the Guayabo National Monument is still impressive in its own right, especially as so little is known about Costa Rica's pre-Columbian past, and the setting is beautiful on the jungle-rich slopes of the Turrialba Volcano. Explore the ruins on foot and see petroglyphs and tombs that were discovered by archaeologists in 1968.

DAY 3

Optional activities in Turrialba.

Turrialba's economy has traditionally revolved around agriculture – it's *queso* (cheese) is famous throughout Costa Rica – but the town now has a burgeoning adventure sports scene.

Activities with an adrenaline rush include ziplining, waterfall rappelling and white water rafting on the world famous Pacuare River, only a short distance from the town.

Those looking for something more sedate may be interested in a tour around CATIE, a research centre and botanical garden showcasing Costa Rica's diverse flora and fauna.

DAY 4

Transfer to San Gerardo de Dota via Copey Estate Winery.

Costa Rica is one of the last places you'd expect to find a vineyard in Latin America. But in Copey de Dota, a village at 2,300m surrounded by the towering Cordillera Talamanca, the Copey Estate Winery is the first and only commercial vineyard in Costa Rica.

Founded in 2012 by a Costa Rican-Israeli couple, the vineyard produces a variety of red and white grapes from pinot noir to sauvignon blanc, and a tour here gives you an insight into not only the inspiration behind the project, but the challenges faced in growing quality grapes in this environment.

The vineyard also has five hectares of golden berries and uses this fruit to produce a liquor named Golden Rush, and other items such as dried fruits and jams. Explore the vineyard and operations plant before savouring several wines and some Golden Rush liquor in the restaurant, whose large windows maximise enjoyment of the mountain views. A charcuterie board with a selection of locally-made cheeses, cold meats and smoked fish is served for lunch before continuing to San Gerardo de Dota.

DAY 5

Quetzal spotting in the Cordillera Talamanca.

San Gerardo de Dota is a small village set deep in a valley surrounded by the towering Talamanca mountain range. At 2,400m, the air is crisp and fresh here – a welcome change from the heat and humidity of the coast.

The surrounding cloud forest is home to a large population of Resplendent Quetzals, one of the most beautiful birds in the Americas with its metallic green plumage, crimson breast and bell. Quetzals reside here year-round, owing to the temperate climate and abundant fruit from the Aguacatillo trees. Like most birds, the Resplendent Quetzal is most easily spotted early in the morning, so today's tour starts at 6am after a cup of fresh coffee to wake you up, returning in time for breakfast.

DAY 6

Optional activities in San Gerardo de Dota

San Gerardo de Dota offers wonderful hiking opportunities, from gentle meanders in the surrounding cloud forest to more challenging hikes in higher elevations of the Cordillera Talamanca.

You may also want to do some more birdwatching. After all, more than 170 bird species have been identified in the area, including Tanagers, Black Guans, Flycatchers, Hummingbirds (Colibri), Trogons, Emerald Toucanets and Sparrows, among many others.

DAY 7

Transfer to Uvita on the Pacific Coast

From San Gerardo de Dota, the road continues to wind through the Cordillera Talamanca, reaching a highest point of 3,450m at Cerro de la Muerte. Don't be put off by its intimidating name – 'Mountain of Death' – this originates from the era before the highway was built when many ill-prepared travellers on foot or horseback succumbed to the cold and rain. To reassure visitors, the mountain has been renamed Cerro Buena Vista – Mountain with a Beautiful View!

The road then descends all the way down to the Pacific Coast and the beach-front town of Uvita, which sits on the border of the Marino Ballena National Park, one of only two protected marine zones in the country. At its heart is the gorgeous, whale-tail-shaped beach where whale-watching tours depart.

DAY 8

Whale watching excursion

Every year, humpback whales migrate to the warm, shallow waters of Marino Ballena National Park and the sight of a 40-tonne mammal jumping out of the water and splashing its gigantic tail is quite spectacular. Sightings are never guaranteed but more likely from July to October when Southern Hemisphere humpback whales migrate from Antarctica, and from December to February when Northern Hemisphere humpback whales arrive from the California and Washington state area. Boat trips typically last three hours and you may also see dolphins and sea turtles, as well as seabirds such as pelicans, frigate birds, brown boobies and many more.

DAY 9

Free time on the beach or explore the area.

The lodge where you are staying is tucked away in a private rainforest reserve, with sweeping views over the Pacific and a sandy palm-shaded beach studded with natural pools. Here you can observe abundant wildlife on gentle trail hikes and take a dip in natural swimming holes. Sport fishing, surfing, kayaking, horse-riding, sailing and snorkelling among schools of tropical fish, turtles and octopuses are also popular additional activities available from the lodge.

It's not all action though: the property has a spa with yoga classes, and you are welcome just to sit back and enjoy a tangerine sunset with a cocktail in your hand.

DAY 10

Transfer to Golfito via the Terraba-Sierpe wetlands

The drive south to Golfito takes two hours. En route, you'll stop in Sierpe, a small town at the mouth of the Sierpe River and the jumping off point for a boat trip through the Terraba-Sierpe National Wetlands. This thriving ecosystem boasts an intricate network of meandering rivers, serene canals and tranquil lagoons, supporting many species of birds, fish, shellfish, mammals and reptiles. Boat tours typically last 2-3 hours and are a rewarding way to break up the journey before continuing to Golfito.

DAYS 11 - 12

Activities at the lodge

The lodge where you are staying has an extensive network of trails, some of which connect with Piedras Blancas National Park. They range from easy to moderate and difficult, from 30 minutes to two hours, and can be self-guided or guided.

The lodge's location on the Golfo Dulce ('Sweet Gulf') means guests can explore the coastline and nearby mangroves by kayak and paddle board as well.

DAY 13

Fly to San José.

Return to San José by small aircraft – this one-hour flight rewards you with some breathtaking views of Costa Rica’s varied landscape, including the Whale’s Tail in Uvita.

Upon arrival at San José’s domestic terminal, you’ll be taken to your hotel up in the hills overlooking the capital for your final night in Costa Rica.

DAY 14

Transfer to the airport for your international flight.

Before your flight home there may be time to do a birdwatching tour or a coffee tour and tasting at your hotel.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Services of our team of experts in our London office
Services of Journey Latin America local representatives and guides
All land and air transport within Latin America
Accommodation as specified
Meals as specified
Excursions as specified, including entrance fees

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

San Gerardo de Dota: Quetzal Spotting
Uvita: Whale watching
Golfito (Playa Nicuesa): self guided hiking and kayaking
Wine tasting at Copey Estate Winery.
Guayabo National Monument
Térraba-Sierpe Wetlands boat trip

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Tips and gratuities
Meals other than specified
International flights to Latin America
Airport taxes, when not included in the ticket
Optional excursions

ESSENTIALS

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS

14 days, 13 nights: San José 1; Turrialba 2, San Gerardo de Dota 3; Uvita 3; Golfito 3; San José outskirts 1.

ACCOMMODATION

Stay at small, intimate and mostly family-run eco-lodges, rustic but comfortable, with a wildlife and outdoor activity focus as well as offering peaceful relaxation.

MEALS

Breakfast: daily.

Lunch: day 4

Full board: days 11 – 12

TRANSPORT

4 road journeys (longest 4 hours); 2 boat journeys (max. 30 mins); 1 flight by small aircraft (Golfito – San Jose)

GUIDES

We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 25 years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by clients on their return. On this particular trip we use specialist naturalist guides where necessary.

CURRENCY

The unit of currency in Costa Rica is the colón.

HOW TO TAKE IT

Cash machines are available in San José airport: taking a debit or credit card with a PIN number is the most convenient way of withdrawing money while on your trip and in many shops and restaurants you can also pay by card. However, since cards can get lost, damaged, withheld or blocked, you should not rely exclusively on a card to access funds.

We recommend that additionally you take a reasonable quantity of US dollars cash (no more than is covered by your insurance), which you can exchange into local currency in San José at the beginning of your trip. Dollar bills should be in good condition, soiled or torn bills may be refused. You can exchange sterling but the rate may be unfavourable and there are fewer outlets providing this service.

TIPPING

Tips are welcomed and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income.

Most service industry workers will welcome a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 – 12% in restaurants.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance is essential.

Details of our recommended policy can be found on our Travel Insurance page.

AIRPORT TAXES

Departure tax is included in the price of the ticket.

TRIP SUITABILITY

Generally this holiday is suitable for all able, reasonably fit visitors, including families with children (except for the vineyard!).

CLIMATE

The trip covers climates ranging from tropical lowland to more temperate zones in the highlands. Those travelling between May and October journeys should encounter high temperatures (around 35°C) and high humidity in the lowlands. The 'official' rainy (green) season is May to October.

CLOTHING AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Bring plenty of light cotton clothing and good, comfortable walking shoes. A waterproof jacket is also necessary. We suggest that you plan to 'layer' your clothing; it is easier and more efficient to put on a couple of light layers than one thick jumper, and sensible to have long sleeves for areas where mosquitos may be lurking. Sandals are a good informal option for evenings. Protection against the sun (sunblock, sun hat) and mosquito repellent are essential and you should bring swimwear. A daypack is useful for carrying sunblock, guidebook, water and any extra layers. If you have your own binoculars we strongly recommend taking them.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts. Good equipment is very important and hard to come by in Central America.

VACCINATIONS

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following; typhoid; polio; tetanus; hepatitis A. For specific requirements you must consult your GP.

You can also find helpful information on the Masta Travel Health website.

VISAS

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports must be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Anyone with a different nationality should enquire with us or check with the relevant consulate.

If flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your online ESTA application.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

GIVE US A CALL

We'd love to chat

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm

Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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