

July, 2017

Costa Rica



WHAT to DO – WHERE to STAY – WHERE to EAT
fun & luxury trips with your kids

PLACES

San Jose
La Fortuna
Monteverde
Playa Papagayo
St. Teresa/Playa Hermosa
Manuel Antonio National Park



COSTA RICA

A beautiful and relatively small country in Central America between Nicaragua, Panama, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean sea. In Costa Rica they have a saying "Pura Vida!", a translation of that phrase is "simple life" or "pure life". The Ticos (inhabitants of Costa Rica) use this term to say hello, goodbye or just to say that everything is great! But to be honest, you will only grasp the meaning of the phrase until you have visited this wonderful and peaceful country. Only then will you truly understand that Pura Vida is the way the Ticos live.

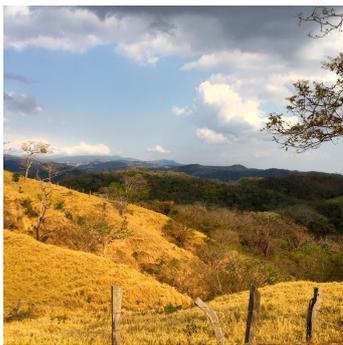
At first we had to get used to Costa Rica, as northern Europeans everything in our lives is structured, well organized and beautiful. But Costa Rica isn't, at least not in the same sense. San Jose, the capital is not a particularly spectacular city. And definitely not what you might have expected when arriving in this popular nature holiday destination. It has a lot of not so charming concrete buildings and a mad traffic. But it might be worth just visiting for one day. We are sorry we didn't.

When you leave San Jose to head out to the wild life of Costa Rica you will again be unpleasantly surprised by the disastrous condition of the roads. Only two-way roads, with an enormous amount of large potholes. Our GPS said it would take us 1,5 hours to drive 45km... At first we laughed and thought the navigation system did not function well... But nope, it was absolutely 100% accurate! It takes very very long to drive from one town to the other in Costa Rica.

But once out there you will completely forget all that unimportant stuff and just slip into the “Pura Vida” way of life. The countryside is breathtaking, the wildlife incredible and the jungle ends right on the endless beaches with no one, but really no one around.

Costa Rica is a perfect destination for families. It's very safe and there is plenty to do for families. The country is adventurous, relaxing, and offers the opportunity to explore the abundant wildlife or learn how to surf, a whole wide spectrum of things.

We only visited the Pacific Coast, as it was rain season on the Caribbean side. But we will for sure return to Costa Rica and explore this beautiful country further, because the Ticos and their Pura Vida way of life sure stole our hearts. Please enjoy reading what we would recommend for a 2,5-3 week stay in Costa Rica.



COSTA RICA BUCKET LIST

- Visit the capital San José;
- Climb the Arenal Volcano;
- Go on a night safari and see the many frogs that come out when darkness falls;
- Go Canopy walking and zip lining in the Monteverde Cloud Forest
- Visit the butterfly Garden of Monteverde;
- Relax for a couple of days at Playa Papagayo in Guanacaste;
- Learn to surf in one of the most relaxing villages of Costa Rica – Santa Teresa/Playa Hermosa;
- Rent a quad and drive around town like locals do in Santa Teresa;
- Enjoy the wild life in Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica's smallest but most popular National Park.

SAN JOSÉ

We didn't stay in San Jose for very long, only for one night to be exact. We were anxious to go see the beautiful wild life of Costa Rica, so decided not discover San Jose.

The only thing we did do, was visit the shopping mall, Multiplaza Escazu. It is the largest shopping mall of Costa Rica and offers both high end and budget stuff. We bought our Hi-Tec hiking shoes here for the kids. Something worth investing in when travelling through a country like Costa Rica.



STAY

Intercontinental Costa Rica at Multi Plaza Mall

Address: In Front Of Multiplaza, San José
1001, Costa Rica
+506 2208 2100

https://www.ihg.com/intercontinental/hotels/us/en/san-jose/sjoha/hoteldetail?cm_mmc=GoogleMaps--IC--CRI--SJOHA

Price range: \$\$\$\$

Location: Located in Escazú, San Jose's most exclusive area.

Accommodation: We stayed in the club towers where the rooms are good but not fantastic.

Dining: The hotel has four restaurants. The most trendy in San José. The buffet restaurant is fine and serves reasonably good food.

Breakfast buffet for kids half price - included in room

Special kids menu available - yes

Facilities for kids: Please visit the "Travel in Style with Kids" website.

Extra info: The hotel is fine for a stop over before heading on your tour of Costa Rica or as a last night before heading home.



LA FORTUNA

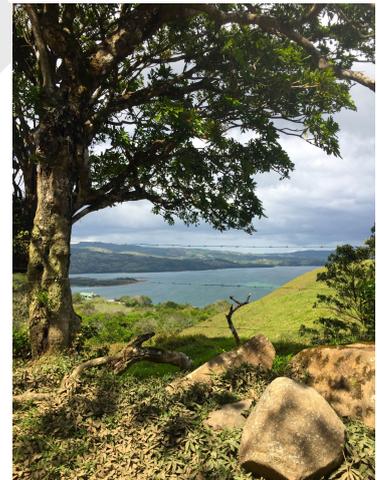
The Arenal Volcano near the small village of La Fortuna, was a dormant volcano for thousands of years, until suddenly the volcano erupted in 1968 and was active for over 42 years until 2010. Every night you could see streams of glowing molten rocks and massive explosions. Those dramatic views are gone, at least for now, but the volcano still offers an amazing view with her picture-perfect conical shaped top which is often covered in clouds.

There are some wonderful things to do around Arenal Volcano National Park. There are many hikes. But one hike that is fun to do with kids is hike up the volcano to the Arenal waterfall and go swimming afterwards to cool down before walking down again.

You can also visit the hot water springs. We only drove past it, as we were very time constrained, that's why we decided not to get out of the car and try it. But I heard from friends who did go it was certainly worth the visit.

We also decided to do the ziplining and canopy walking experience in Monteverde Cloud forest and not in Arenal. As the Monteverde area is the most famous one in Costa Rica for zip lining.

We did go on a night safari. During this hike we saw one of the most iconic and famous residents of Costa Rica the red eyed tree frog. The frog is really small and fits on the finger of a young child. But that's not the only wild life we encountered. We saw sloths, and even a baby one (unbelievably cute), blue jeans frogs, glass frogs, splendid leaf frog and many more whose names I really don't recall. Did you know that Costa Rica is home to more than 150 know species of frogs and toads and researchers even believe there are a lot more yet to be discovered? Isn't that incredible!



LA FORTUNA BUCKET LIST

- Hike up Arenal Volcano;
- Visit Lake Arenal
- Hike to La Fortuna Waterfall;
- Go ziplining and canopy walking at [Sky Adventures Costa Rica](#);
- Soak in Arenal Volcano Hot Springs (not recommended for children under 12) at [Tabacon](#);
- Do a night safari and admire all those beautiful frog species and more bookings can be made at <http://www.ecocentrodanaus.com/en/>.



STAY

Nayara Resort Spa & Gardens

Address: 702 road 21007, Provincia de Alajuela,
La Fortuna, Costa Rica
+506 2479 1600
<http://www.arenalnayara.com>

Price range: \$\$\$\$

Location: Hidden in a lush paradise near La Fortuna in the heart of Arenal Volcano National Park.

Accommodation: The rooms are tropical and wonderful. Unfortunately no connecting rooms possible, so we booked two Rainforest villas next to each other. All the rooms have a beautiful wooden private terrace with Jacuzzi, and offer a view on the Arenal Volcano. The bathroom is huge and also has an outdoor shower.

Dining: The hotel has 4 restaurants and also offers a private dining option. While having breakfast in the restaurant or lunch at the pool you will be greeted by the house parrot Carlota. Breakfast buffet for kids half price - was included in room
Special kids menu available - yes

Facilities for kids: Please visit the "Travel in Style with Kids" website.

Extra info: The hotel is divided into the adults only Nayara Springs hotel and the family welcoming Nayara hotel. The hotel has been named one of the world's best resorts by Travel & Leisure, Condé Nast Traveler and Trip Advisor. The service is wonderful. We absolutely loved this hotel, with its beautiful rooms, great spa and delicious restaurants.



MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST

There is almost always a mist hanging over the Monteverde jungle. The biological reserve is the most well known cloud forest in the world for its wide variety of biodiversity, important conservation contribution and scientific researches. It houses 2,5% of worldwide biodiversity whilst Costa Rica only represents 0,03% of the landmass on the planet.

It is one of the most beautiful and famous spots on earth to go zip lining and canopy walking. It even has the longest zip lines in the country. In the Monteverde area the somewhat larger town of Santa Elena is located, a typical central American town with a square, market and some local restaurants catering the needs of tourists that come here and admire the beauty of the cloud forest in case, as Newsweek declared a place to remember before, it disappears.

MONTEVERDE BUCKET LIST

- Go hiking;
- Go canopy walking;
- Go zip lining, <http://skyadventures.travel> (minimum height 1,20m).

STAY

Monteverde Lodge & Gardens

Address: 400 metros al este del Ranario
 Santa Elena, 25216, Costa Rica
 +(506) 2257 0766
<http://www.monteverdelodge.com>

Price range: \$\$\$

Location: Located 15 minutes from the Monteverde Cloud Forest.

Accommodation: Simple rooms with no air-conditioning or television.

Dining: The hotel has only one restaurant. We didn't stay to eat.
 Breakfast buffet for kids half price - included in room
 Special kids menu available -

Facilities for kids: Please visit the "Travel in Style with Kids" website.
 Extra info: National Geographic featured this hotel in Tours of a Lifetime. The hotel is not bad, but certainly not luxurious or memorable. But it is the best hotel available in the area. The rooms look much nicer on the photos on the Internet than in real life. Stayed here for 1 night, could imagine staying 2 but that would be the absolute maximum. The hotel does have a butterfly garden, something the children loved!

EAT

Amy's

Address: Puntarenas, Monteverde, Costa Rica
 Reservations: Online or via +(506) 8706 9921
 Website: <http://www.amyscr.com>
 Cuisine: Mixed kitchen
 Kidsmenu: No but they have from pizzas to pasta to fish and steaks
 Experience: This little restaurant located in Santa Elena is nothing special, but it does breathe the local Costa Rica life as many locals eat here as well.
 My suggestion from the menu is the "Casados" a local dish.



PENINSULA PAPAGAYO GUANACASTE

High up in the northwest corner of the Guanacaste Province, just a 60 minute ride from the airport of Liberia is a newly developed center of luxury in Costa Rica, the Papagayo Peninsula. The Peninsula is popular holiday destination amongst Americans with children because of the safe, private and generally calm beaches. Some of the world's last and most diverse dry forests are found in the Guanacaste province.

STAY

Andaz Peninsula Papagayo Resort

Address: Peninsula Papagayo, Guanacaste Province
 Papagayo Peninsula, 50104,
 Costa Rica
 +(506) 2690 1234
www.papagayo.andaz.hyatt.com
 Price range: \$\$\$\$



- Location:** Located in the Guanacaste province
- Accommodation:** Beautiful eco-chique rooms with a view on the ocean or forest. Connecting rooms available. A maximum of 4 persons per room allowed consisting of 2 adults and 2 children, under the age of 12 years.
- Facilities for kids:** Please visit the "Travel in Style with Kids" website.
- Dining:** The hotel has three restaurants an open air Rio Bhongo where breakfast is also served, the Latin-influenced Chao Pescao and the seafood restaurant Ostra.
- Extra info:** We stayed here for 4 nights and honestly it was a bit too long. The hotel is perfect if you are tired and looking for a relaxing resort vacation with your children. But besides that there is not much to do in the resort or this area of Costa Rica. The spa is a real treat!



SANTA TERESA / PLAYA HERMOSA

Santa Teresa, our favorite place in Costa Rica! Santa Teresa, near Mal Pais, there are two Santa Teresa's in Costa Rica, It is located in one of the five "Blue Zones" in the world, meaning people live significantly longer and healthier lives. The town has beautiful beaches, hip restaurants, great surf, boutique hotels and super chique hidden villas.

The NY Times has called it "The Next Tulum" in 2016. But let's hope not too many people take the effort of making the trip, so that Santa Teresa will keep it's hidden paradise status for the years to come.

Santa Teresa is a town where things are still basic and life is simple. Driving around on an ATV is an absolute must, as the only road that runs through town is bad. But it's not only a necessity it's also really fun. We rented two and both of us took two kids. Something which is normal practice in this town. We even saw mothers with babies in slings and 3 children sitting on the back spoiler with groceries hanging on here steer. How's that for cool!

At 5 am howling monkeys wake you. As their howling starts when the jungle is coming alive. You can spend your days surfing, sipping coffee and watching

the wild life. I think it's here where "Pura Vida" was invented. Several expats settled down in Santa Teresa while wandering around the world. We even discussed staying here. "No need to see anything else, let's just stay here and enjoy the simple, beautiful pure life".

SANTA TERESA BUCKET LIST

- Take surfing lessons;
- Rent an ATV (<http://www.quadtourscostarica.com>);
- Do as the locals do;
- And relax.



STAY

The Floating House

Address: Puntarenas, Costa Rica
+(506) 2640 0550

[The Floating House](#)

Price range: \$\$\$\$

Location: In Playa Hermosa. Located in the jungle within walking distance of the beach.

Accommodation: The house sleeps 7. 2 bedrooms are located upstairs and 1 downstairs.

Dining: Self-catering or you can also request a private chef.

Facilities for kids: Please visit the "Travel in Style with Kids" website.

Extra info: The Floating House was designed by an award winning Costa Rican architect and offers a really unique experience floating above the canopy of the jungle. From every room upstairs you have incredible views of the ocean and the wildlife of the jungle. Many things are sustainable about the house, the floors, water heating and filtrations systems. The house is located in Playa Hermosa, a hidden gem located just 10 minutes from Santa Teresa. Everything can be arranged for you. You can ask them to deliver groceries before your arrival, while there they can arrange

a massage therapist for you coming to your house, a baby sitter or a private chef. Be careful when leaving the house, you'll have to close all doors and windows or you'll have unwanted visitors looking for food, aka the capuchin monkeys that live in the trees around the house. They make a real mess ;).

EAT

Banana Beach restaurant

Address: Villa Bonita Drive, Puntarenas, Santa Teresa Beach, 60111, Costa Rica
 Reservations: +(506) 2640 1117
 Website: [Banana Beach](#)
 Cuisine: Simple and easy food
 Kidsmenu: -
 Experience: A nice beach restaurant located in Santa Teresa, to have lunch or late afternoon drinks while the children play on the beach.



The Bakery

Address: 50 meters north of Franks at Playa Carmen Mal Pais, Costa Rica
 + (506) 2640 0560
 Reservations: possible but not necessary
 Website: [The Bakery](#)
 Cuisine: Delicious sandwiches and pizza's
 Kidsmenu: -
 Experience: A great French Bakery in the middle of Santa Teresa. Go here for fresh croissants and baguettes early in the morning and take a fresh juice while there. They also have delicious French pastries. Once a week they have all you can eat pizza night.

Couleur Café

Address: Playa Hermosa, Santa Teresa 2640, Costa Rica
 Reservations: +(506) 2640 0677
 Website: -
 Cuisine: Simple but delicious coffee and food, mostly brunch and lunch. Open for dinner twice a week
 Kidsmenu: -
 Experience: A simple and small restaurant in Playa Hermosa. With surf style interior. Great for coffee and lunch. They serve wonderful eggs Benedict and super sandwiches. Located just a few meters from the beach in Playa Hermosa.

Habaneros

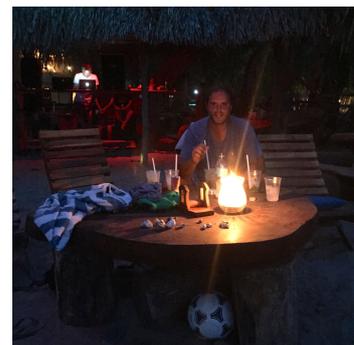
Address: Villa Bonita Dr, Puntarenas Province, Costa Rica
 Reservations: +(506) 2640 1106
 Website: [Playa Cielo](#)
 Cuisine: Mexican food
 Kidsmenu: -
 Experience: A super relaxed beachfront location to have Mexican food.

Koji's

Address: Calle Buenos Aires, Provincia de Puntarenas, Costa Rica
 Reservations: a must! Call: +(506) 2640 0815 (open Wednesday – Sunday)
 Website: [Koji's](#)
 Cuisine: Japanese food
 Kidsmenu: -
 Experience: Our favorite place in Santa Teresa/Playa Hermosa. We went here two times for dinner (they serve dinner only). One night we went after the Rocamar drinks on Sunday. The place was packed, we were so happy we made reservations. The food is delicious, actually delicious is not the right word, it was incredible! You can't leave Santa Teresa without having dinner here!!

Rocamar

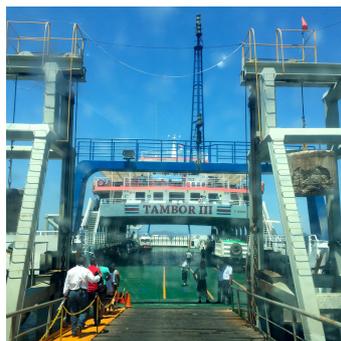
Address: Beach Access Road at Blue Surf Sanctuary in north Santa Teresa
 Reservations: +(506) 2640-0003
 Website: -
 Cuisine: Simple beach food, taste the Caipirinha!
 Kidsmenu: -
 Experience: A simple place, perfectly positioned for sunset. Every Sunday evening, the locals come here with their children for family Sunday around 5 pm. There is live music, fire dancing and the children play on the beach. Amazing ambiance.





MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK

The smallest and most popular national park of Costa Rica. One advise, go as early as possible or you'll be tripping over the tourists masses that come here every day. It gets quite busy during the day because many tourists people come here on a day trip from San Jose, which is within easy reach. When arriving at the park many guides will ask you, if they can take you on a tour. We at first didn't want to. But believe me, it gives the walk in the park so much extra value. They have a trained eye for spotting wild life, something we as tourists completely lack. We saw many monkeys, sloths (2 and 3 toed ones), bats, and crabs. Many of the animals we spotted trough the telescope the guides carry with them. The children absolutely loved it! At the end of the walk there is a beach where you can take a nice cooling dip and buy some water. There is nothing else for sale in the park. The park is worth visiting but a few hours in the park is more than enough and I would therefor not recommend to stay in this area for more than 2 nights. We came here from Santa Teresa via Punta Arenas by ferryboat, a good choice that saves you a lot of extra driving time.



STAY

The Preserve at Los Altos Resort

- Address: Kilometer 4 on main road to Manuel Antonio National Park,
Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica
+(506) 2777-8888
<http://www.thepreserveatlosaltos.com>
- Price range: \$\$\$
- Location: Located near the Manuel Antonion National Park on the beach
- Accommodation: Spacious apartment-like rooms.
- Dining: The hotel has only one restaurant, Karolas. We only had breakfast here as we decided to dine in the apartment.
Breakfast buffet for kids half price -
Special kids menu available -
- Facilities for kids: Please visit the "Travel in Style with Kids" website.
- Extra info: We stayed in a treetop ocean and jungle view suite. The suites are actually all the same, they sleep 2/4/6 persons, the only difference is the view. I think this is your best choice when staying around Manuel Antonio National Park, especially when travelling with children. The apartments are spacious and the resort offers everything you need.

EAT

Copos Don Manuel Antonio

- Address: Puntarenas, Quepos, Costa Rica
+506 7098 8716
- Reservations: not necessary
- Website: -
- Cuisine: Simple beach food
- Kidsmenu: -
- Experience: A little restaurant right on the beach. Great for some simple food after visiting the Manuel Antonio National Park. Next to the restaurant there are sunbeds for rent. It's a great place to have a swim, but be careful with the rip current!!



ITINERARY

Driving around in Costa Rica is easy, it just take a little more time than you're used to. The infrastructure is not good; roads are mostly 2 way roads and have many potholes and bad road lights. So don't drive at night. Renting a 4x4 is a must, especially if you're planning on going to places like Santa Teresa where you'll have to cross creeks in order to get there. This is a sample itinerary. Costa Rica is such an amazingly beautiful country with so many things to see, you can easily add or adapt the route to see more of what Costa Rica has

San Jose to La Fortuna is about 3,5 hours. (150 km)

La Fortuna to Monteverde 3 hours. (162 km)

Monteverde to Playa Papagayo will take you 5 hours. (180 km)

Playa Papagayo to Santa Teresa is about 4,5 hours. (226 km)

From Santa Teresa to Manuel Antonio National Park 5 hours (excluding ferry time). (240 km)

Manuel Antonio National Park to San Jose is about a 2,5 hours drive. (160 km)

TIPS

- The most important things to take with you to Costa Rica are jungle pants, good hiking shoes, good slippers, your swimsuit, lots of mosquito repellent and suntan lotion.
- Take your time when travelling from one spot to another, roads are in bad condition and travelling takes much longer than you are used to.
- Do not drive at night; roads are not well lit and thus dangerous, as you cannot spot the holes in the road without good lights.
- Bring (hamman) towels with you when traveling to Costa Rica. Costa Rica has beautiful deserted beaches and is perfect for relaxing on the beach but there are few facilities located on the beach such as sun bed rentals etc.
- Be very careful with the Pacific rip current!!! Our children almost drowned! Especially the little ones will not be able to get out. On all of the beaches there's a sign telling you how to get of the current. Study this carefully.
- Do take guides at the National Parks to guide you. We first thought it was a waste of money but we soon had to revise our opinion after we concluded that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to spot the wildlife yourself.
- Go zip lining! It's so much fun and Costa Rica is one of the safest places to do it!
- Take cash when travelling to Santa Teresa/Playa Hermosa, this is a no credit card area. There are ATM's but sometimes they are out of cash and it may take a long time to refill the machines.

WHEN TO GO

Costa Rica is a year round destination, Do check out which side of Costa Rica is best to visit in which season. Both sides have different rain seasons.



Important notice! Before planning your trip, ALWAYS check out the latest information on up to date websites. Hotels and restaurants may change name, close down, policies may be adjusted. The guide is to be used as a reference for helping you plan your trip. No rights or claims can be made based on information provided to you in this guide or on the travelinstylewithkids.com website.

“TAKE THE KIDS, GO PLACES, MAKE MEMORIES”

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