



ACTIVITIES ABROAD TRIP DOSSIER

COSTA RICA ACTIVE FAMILY ADVENTURE

If there is any other country in the world that is more suited to active exploration than Costa Rica then we would like to know about it. From coast to country, volcanoes to rainforests, Costa Rica has everything: rafting, kayaking, canyoning, trekking, horse riding and even rainforest zip wires are but a few of the highlights. Throw in the remarkably diverse flora and fauna, stunning land and seascapes and, best of all, the genuine warmth of the local people and you have a unique and truly unforgettable family activity holiday.

This family activity holiday is suitable for children aged 9 years and over. (Please note that this does not preclude younger children but participation in the activities will be at the discretion of our instructors.)

OUR OPINION

Activity heaven. We couple some sedate activities with some real adrenaline pumpers and it's all set amidst the rainforests and stunning landscapes of Costa Rica.

AGENDA **14 days, 13 nights**

Wednesday **Flights, Arrival and Introduction**

You will be met at Juan Santa Maria Airport and transferred to your hotel. There will be a brief introduction en route followed by a free evening to relax.

Thursday **San Jose and Coffee Tour**

After a lie in and breakfast we get together for an introductory meeting, before our sightseeing and shopping excursion into bustling San Jose. We are then transferred to Café Britt for an interactive and educational tour, giving us an insight into Costa Rica's coffee industry, followed by a delicious lunch. In the evening we visit a downtown restaurant for our welcome meal featuring typical local dishes to get you in the Costa Rican spirit. (Breakfast, lunch and dinner)

Friday **Rainforest Boat Trip and Tortuguero**

An early start today as we drive through beautiful mountains and plantations to the Tortuguero Canals. We change our mode of transport for a two hour boat trip through the rainforests to Mawamba Lodge. Look out for caiman on the way!!

Please Note: There is a luggage limit of 25lbs per person on the boat trip to Tortuguero. Extra luggage will be stored securely by representatives.

Suggested Kit **T-Shirts, shorts, 1 long pair of trousers, walking shoes, beach sandals, light waterproof jacket, insect repellent, sun cream, hat, swim wear, camera, and binoculars.**

In the afternoon we visit Tortuguero Village, explore the beach and learn about turtle conservation. (Breakfast, lunch and dinner)

Suggested Kit **Sun Cream and a light waterproof.**

Turtle Watching Trips can be arranged at the lodge for around \$25.00 per person. The trips take place at night in either an 8pm-10pm slot or 10pm-12am. Guests have no control over which slot they are allocated or which areas they may visit with their guide as these are determined by a lottery each day. You must make your reservations for the trips on the day you wish to participate before 3pm at the hotel reception

The turtle nesting seasons are as follows:

Leatherback Turtles: Nesting Season March to July (Peak: April and May)

Green Turtle: July to November (Peak: September)

Saturday Tortuguero Exploration Day

An early morning boat trip gives us the best chance of spotting howler monkeys, caiman, otters, toucans and iguanas in their natural habitat. After breakfast we hike into the rainforest to explore the flora and fauna. The afternoon is free to relax or you have the opportunity to take to the water again for a kayak trip (optional activity - see prices below) exploring the Tortuguero canals. (Breakfast, lunch and dinner)

Suggested Kit Extra layer of clothes, sun cream, hat, waterproof, camera, binoculars. Walking boots, waterproof, sun cream, hat, camera and binoculars.

The afternoon is free to relax or you have the opportunity to take to the water again for a kayak trip (optional activity - see prices below) exploring the Tortuguero canals. (Breakfast, lunch and dinner)

Suggested Kit Swimsuit, shorts, sandals/old trainers, hat, sun cream, cameras and binoculars.

Sunday Tortuguero to Sarapiquí

We leave the canals behind today and head inland to beautiful Sarapiquí. En route we stop at the Museum of Indigenous Cultures and will arrive at the hotel with time to relax and explore. (Breakfast, lunch and dinner)

Monday Adrenaline Day

A day of pure fun and adrenaline which includes: an exhilarating three hour rafting trip on the Sarapiquí River, horse riding and finally, zip wires through the forest canopy. We then head to our forest camp for a well earned rest under canvas. And, even if you don't fancy sleeping in a tent, wait until you hear the sounds of the rainforest at night! (Breakfast, lunch and dinner)

Suggested Kit Synthetic shorts and t-shirts, sandals or old trainers, and a waterproof camera. Long trousers, t-shirt, trainers, and insect repellent for forest canopy.

Tuesday Volcano Hike and Hot Springs

We transfer to Arenal and our luxury hotel with amazing views of an active volcano! After lunch, we trek (optional activity - see prices below) towards the volcano. Our efforts are well rewarded when we arrive at an awe-inspiring view point in time to see the sun go down and the lava glow. We then head for a dip in the hot springs at the foot of the volcano. (Breakfast, lunch)

Suggested Kit Swimsuit, towel, waterproof, comfortable shoes, camera, insect repellent, and sun cream.

Wednesday Volunteering and cultural day (approx duration 6 hours)

Costa Rica is at the forefront of responsible tourism and travel management. We are trying to play our part by encouraging our clients to get closely involved with local communities and conservation projects. Today we visit Eco-Centre Danaus and, working with the local people and their children, we will be helping on a reforestation project. We will spend time planting trees and seedlings and generally getting a bit mucky as well as witnessing local lifestyles at close quarters. (Breakfast and dinner)

Suggested Kit Comfortable clothes and shoes, camera, sun cream and hat.

Thursday Rainforest Canyoning (approx duration: ½ day)

After a free morning we will be picked up and taken for lunch at the canyoning base camp. A 30 minute drive in the shadow of the Arenal Volcano takes us to the edge of the rainforest. From there, a short descent on foot takes us to the top of our first abseil, a stunning 50m waterfall. Four more descents await us in this tropical paradise before we reach the foot of the canyon and return to the hotel doubtless reliving the experience as we go. (Breakfast and lunch)

Suggested Kit Synthetic shorts and t-shirt, waterproof camera, and walking sandals or old trainers.

Friday Arenal to Dominical

From Central Costa Rica we head to the Pacific Coast and with a late afternoon arrival the rest of the day is free to relax. Our hotel boasts one of the best positions in Dominical. (Breakfast and dinner)

Saturday Dolphin and whale watching (approx duration: full day)

Today we depart early from Sierpe and head out into the Pacific to start our search for the five species of whale and dolphin that inhabit the area. The views of the coast are spectacular. (Breakfast and lunch)

Sunday Free Day

In this surfer's paradise it is almost compulsory to have a go at riding the Pacific waves. The hotel can arrange lessons. Alternatively, you can try out one of the many other activities available locally or simply relax by the pool. The choice is entirely yours. (Breakfast)

Monday Return to San Jose

In San Jose there's time to pack before heading to the famous El Rodeo steak house for our farewell meal (vegetarians well catered for!). (Breakfast and dinner)

Tuesday Adios Costa Rica!

All good things must come to an end and after breakfast we head to the airport for our return flights home. (Breakfast)

Please note that the above itinerary is subject to change at the discretion of the activity providers for reasons of safety or other unforeseen circumstances. Wherever possible any alternative arrangements will be in keeping with the spirit of the original itinerary.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

This is not a comprehensive packing list simply a guide line of suggestions that you might find useful on the trip. There are many products available from our website via the clothing icon. This can be found on the "preparing for our trip" section of our web homepage. You can then type the desired product into the search engine. Nomad Travel are offering Activities Abroad clients a **10% Discount** off almost everything online or in store (the link can be found on the "preparing for our trip" section of our web homepage www.activitiesabroad.com). Simply enter or quote the special discount code received with your booking.

Given the variety of different activities on this trip we suggest you take the following with you:-

Please note that all safety equipment (helmets, life-jackets, harnesses etc) are provided on this trip.

Clothing

- Waterproof jacket and trousers
- Warm layer such as fleece or sweatshirt for cooler evenings.
- Sturdy trainers or walking shoes (boots give the best ankle support) a full range is available on our outdoor clothing icon.
- Comfortable long trousers for some land based activities (not jeans).
- Clothes for getting wet during some of the activities. Surf shorts and top or other quick drying synthetic clothing are ideal.
- Sports sandals or old trainers for getting wet.
- Swimming gear and towel for water based activities
- Sun hat
- Some clothes that you do not mind getting dirty

Equipment

- Daysac (25+ litres) Please note that this must be large enough for an over night stay.
- Sunhat.
- Large water-bottle.
- Binoculars.
- Camera (The outdoor clothing link provides waterproof pouches to protect your camera).
- Waterproof camera (if you want to take pictures during water based activities).
- Insect repellent.
- Personal first aid kit
- Sunglasses, sun screen and lip salve. Which are available from the outdoor clothing link where there are several products to choose from, including total sun block.
- Torch we recommend the 2D Cell Maglite torch or alternatively a head torch would also be useful.
- Biodegradable travel wash (some hotels do have a laundry service available at extra cost however this allows for more flexibility)
- Some plastic bags. These will protect your clothes and items such as cameras from the humidity and from any wet clothing you may have following an activity.

GENERAL PACKING LIST

ITEM	CHECK	ITEM	CHECK
Passport		Toiletries	
Air Tickets		Universal Travelling Adapter	
Trip Dossier and Itinerary		Sweets & Snacks for journey	
Insurance Documents		Notebook/Diary/Pen	
Money/Travellers Cheques/Credit Card		Guide Book	
Insurance Documents		Games, books, toys for your kids	
Glasses/Contact Lenses		Small Sewing Kit	

For details regarding hand luggage restrictions please visit www.baa.com

For all other airports please go to the relevant airport website.

CLIMATE

The Costa Rican climate varies depending upon elevation, location, and season with a little change in temperature from month to month. While the coastal plains are tropical, the mountain regions tend to be cool, and the Central Plateau has a spring-like climate year-round, (average daily temperature 75 F or 25 C). December through April is the dry season, and most of the rainfall occurs from May to November - mainly in the afternoons

SUN PROTECTION

Please be safe in the sun. Wear protective clothing (ideally tops and trousers made of tightly woven fabrics that you can't see through when held up to light) and a hat that shades the face, neck and ears when out in the sun. Use a high factor sunscreen and remember to reapply after swimming. You should also bear in mind that you are just as likely to get burnt up a mountain as on a beach.

Lighter coloured, long legged or long sleeved clothing made from tightly woven fabric will also help protect you from mosquito bites.

PARENTAL SUPERVISION

Our family holidays are designed to be just that, family holidays. During activities, our guides are there to provide advice, tuition and supervision but we must stress that you are responsible for the child or children in your care. We do not employ qualified child minders and you should not put our guides or other group members in a position where they are responsible for the care of your child or children

AIRPORT TRANSFERS

We depart from Juan Santa Maria Airport in San Jose on Wednesday and return to the same airport 14 days later.

AIRPORT TRANSFER INFORMATION

Our airport transfer time is included in your holiday documents and you must be at the designated meeting point at that time. If you do not arrive on time we can not guarantee that the transfer can be delayed as this means holding up the entire group. If you do miss your transfer then you will need to make your own arrangements to your accommodation.

If your flight is delayed, please telephone either your local representative or our UK emergency number. Emergency numbers are provided in your final travel letter.

DEPARTURE TAX

US\$ 26.00 per person departure tax is payable at the airport before departure.

BAGGAGE ALLOWANCES

Please refer to your flight booking confirmation for information on your baggage allowance.

For the Caribbean portion of the trip in Tortuguero there is a baggage limit of 25lbs or approx 12kgs per person. Additional luggage will be secured in San Jose and returned on day 5.

CARD FRAUD

We recommend that you tell your bank or card issuer where you're going abroad and what dates you will be travelling. This avoids the embarrassment of having your card refused because your bank thinks you could be a fraudster yourself! Give the bank or card issuer your contact details so that they can call you if they spot an unusual transaction.

CURRENCY AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE

The local currency in Costa Rica is the Colon. US Dollars are widely accepted in tourist areas and most prices for souvenirs are marked in dollars and change will be given in Colones. In smaller establishments you should expect to pay in Colones. Most major UK debit and credit cards are accepted in hotels.

There are a number of cash points in San Jose, Arenal and Tamarindo. Traveller's cheques in dollars can be exchanged at banks and some hotels with the presentation of a valid passport.

CARIBBEAN CONSERVATION CORPORATION (CCC)

US\$1 per person is payable upon arrival at the CCC in Tortuguero.

BOOKING ACTIVITIES LOCALLY

In almost all of our destinations you can book and pay for additional activities locally. Please note that we can not be held responsible for any injury or loss that occurs through any activities that are booked in your destination.

TIPPING

At your discretion you may wish to tip your guides at the end of your stay as a gesture of appreciation for their efforts during your holiday. A 10% service charge and 13% sales tax are always included in restaurant bills. An additional 10% tip is suggested. Taxi drivers do not expect a tip. Porters should receive \$3 or \$4 depending on the hotel, and chambermaids \$2 per day.

ACCOMMODATION – OUR OPINION

El Rodeo Country Inn - San Jose

A small characterful establishment situated on the outskirts of the city and just 10 minutes drive from the airport. The hotel has 27 large bedrooms with cable T.V, air conditioning, phone, security box, private bathrooms & hair dryer. Each room has either two queen sized beds or one king size bed.

Hotel amenities include: restaurant and steak house (vegetarians are well catered for), coffee bar, sauna, jacuzzi, swimming pools, tennis court, conference room, play area, pool table and free internet access.

Mawamba Lodge - Tortuguero

Mawamba Lodge is located on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast. We reach the lodge via a 2 hour river boat trip along the canals of Tortuguero. Mawamba is a 15-acre beachfront establishment offering excellent views of the canals making it the ideal hideaway for nature lovers and people seeking soft adventure.

The lodge features 54 basic but comfortable rooms with private shower rooms, hot water and ceiling fans. Additional features include: Large swimming pool, a tree frog garden, tropical gardens, volleyball court, games room, gift shop, restaurant and bar.

Si Como No – Manuel Antonio

Fringed by tropical rainforest, Manuel Antonio is considered to be the most beautiful coastline in Costa Rica so where better to spend your last few days in Costa Rica? Si Como No is ideal for rest and relaxation before you return home.

With stunning views, excellent accommodation, extensive facilities including a Serenity Spa, wonderful activities and a great range of restaurants and cuisines we are sure you will be reluctant to depart at the end of your stay.

Cuculmecca Tented Camp - Sarapiquí

Cuculmecca Camp has 27 tents pitched on platforms in the forest allowing you to experience the sounds of the rainforest at night. Each tent has the capacity for four mattresses and all have an electric bulb outside, a sink with drinking water, mattresses, sleeping bags and torches. There are two wooden shower and toilet blocks with hot running water.

If you prefer not to spend the night in a tent, we can arrange for you to sleep at La Quinta (a supplement may apply).

The Arenal Kioro - Arenal

One night in a tent is followed by three in one of the best hotels in Costa Rica. Opened in 2006, Kioro provides 5-star luxury and the most spectacular of locations. From the hot tub in your bedroom you can witness the spectacular pyrotechnics and the thundering soundtrack that emanate from the Arenal Volcano. Accommodation is in sumptuous suites all of which have two terraces, one of which offers panoramic views of the volcano and the other, of the surrounding hills and countryside.

Each suite has a hydro-massage hot tub, air conditioning, safe box, minibar, coffee maker, en-suite shower room with hairdryer and key card safety locks.

Hotel facilities include a stunning spa, a games room, an excellent restaurant, bar, swimming pool and free internet access.

La Quinta Country Inn - Sarapiquí

La Quinta is a family owned, eco-friendly hotel set amongst beautiful pineapple plantations. It's a vibrant and colourful hotel, relaxed with the warmest of Costa Rican welcomes. Accommodation is in en-suite bedrooms with a ceiling fan and all have a porch complete with hammocks, rocking chairs, and views of the gardens.

Other facilities include a games room, a swimming pool, tropical wildlife gardens (with resident caiman) a frog park, butterfly house and vegetable garden where food is grown organically and used in the kitchen.

LOCAL FOOD – OUR OPINION

San Jose

There is a buffet breakfast available at the El Rodeo Country Inn and a famous steak house within the grounds.

Tortuguero

Mawamba Lodge offers all buffet style meals. Breakfast includes the famous Gallo Pinto (rice and beans) and eggs and bacon, cereals, toast and fresh tropical fruits. Fresh coffee and tea are also available with fresh fruit juices. Lunch and dinner are international buffets with a Costa Rican edge including meat and fresh fish. Fresh fruits and a dessert are also provided.

Sarapiquí

The La Quinta Country Inn offers buffet meals throughout the day. Dinner consists of a home cooked Costa Rican and international foods with many ingredients coming from the garden. Breakfast is buffet style.

Your meals at Pozo Azul will be served in the activity centre's restaurant overlooking the Sarapiquí River.

Arenal

The Arenal Kioro serves a delicious buffet breakfast in the mornings everything from French toast to Gallo Pinto. In the evenings the restaurant Heliconias serves high quality food from its international and Costa Rican Menu including palm heart soup. Lunch is also served in the Heliconias restaurant.

In La Fortuna town there is an abundance of fast food and Costa Rican style restaurants or Sodas. These Sodas serve the traditional rice and beans, casados (a selection of rice and beans, plantain, meat or fish and salad), delicious fajitas, ceviche (marinated seafood) and many also serve pizzas and burgers.

Soda	A basic Costa Rican café serving 'comida típica' (traditional food)
Casado	A meal that contains some combination of black beans, rice, plantain, salad meat or fish. Served across Costa Rica in Sodas.
Boca	A small snack
Ensalada	Salad
Gallo Pinto	Rice and beans, the national dish. This is black beans and rice cooked together some onion and broth.
Patacones	Thinly sliced plantain deep fried. Very Caribbean.
Salsa Lizano	Costa Rican ketchup. Lizano is served everywhere and can be bought in the duty free shops at the airport. Delicious sauce served with rice and flavoured with tamarind.
Cerviche	Raw seafood marinated in lemon/lime and with onion.
Tamarindo	Tamarind. This is a sour fruit but seriously refreshing and common in Costa Rica.
Guaro	The Costa Rican Ouzo. Made from distilled cane juice it can be mixed with cola or juice to make a long drink. Be careful!!
Cerveza	Beer. The most common is Imperial. Costing between \$1 and \$3 depending on where you are drinking it.
Vino	Wine. Costa Rica isn't famed for its wines so imports from Chile and Argentina are the best.
Agua	Water. Drinkable in San Jose and many other areas but available bottled everywhere.

Typically a 3 course meal in a simple mid-range restaurant would cost around \$16. Typical local food in small sodas etc will be around \$7 for two courses. A beer will typically cost \$1-2 and a soft drink around \$1.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Visa Requirements

British nationals do not require a visa to enter Costa Rica and can stay as visitors for up to three months. Passports should have a validity of more than six months from the date of entry. If a longer stay is required or for employment, the Costa Rican Embassy, should be contacted for advice. The immigration authorities are strict about detaining foreigners who are undocumented or tourists who have overstayed.

Prospective residents should make applications in their country of residence as it is no longer possible to apply in Costa Rica although, having applied, you may enter the country and stay for three month periods until the procedure is finalised.

Passport validity

Passports should have a validity of more than six months from the date of entry.

Yellow Fever requirements

All visitors to Costa Rica arriving from any of the following countries (Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, French Guyana, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Gambia and Sudan) are now required to produce an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis documenting yellow fever vaccination before entry to Costa Rica will be granted. Certificates are valid 10 days after the date of vaccination.

Travelling with children

Under Costa Rican law, children under the age of 18 born in Costa Rica are automatically considered to be Costa Rican citizens, even if travelling on a British passport. Notarised written consent from both parents, or Costa Rican passport, is required in order to leave Costa Rica. The nearest Costa Rican Embassy or Consulate should be contacted for further information on laws regarding the international travel of Costa Rican children.

TRAVEL SAFETY

The safety of our clients is of paramount importance at all times in terms of activity participation and destination. We always follow the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and should they advise against travel for any reason you will be contacted with a view to making alternative arrangements. We monitor this advice on a daily basis. To see this advice for yourself visit www.fco.gov.uk

TRAVELLING TO, OR VIA, THE USA

Since many trips to Costa Rica are made via the United States, it is important to note that with effect from 26 October 2004, all passport holders who wish to enter the US under the Visa Waiver Programme must present an individual machine-readable passport. Travellers without a machine-readable passport must obtain a non-immigrant visa from the nearest US Embassy prior to travel. Should you need to replace your passport in Costa Rica, you should apply to the British Embassy. For further details, in particular concerning children travelling on a parent's passport, please contact the US Embassy.

HEALTH

Medical care in Costa Rica is of a high standard. Only emergency medical treatment is available without charge for visitors.

Dengue Fever is common to Latin America and the Caribbean and can occur throughout the year. In 2007 there was a marked increase in the number of reported cases of dengue. San Jose and the Central Valley can be particularly affected.

Malaria is also common in Costa Rica, especially in areas close to banana growing areas. In October and November 2006, there was a significant increase in the number of cases reported in Limon Province. There have been more cases, reported in June 2008, in areas around Laurel close to the border with Panama.

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Costa Rica and ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up-to-date. For further information on vaccination requirements, health outbreaks and general disease protection and prevention you should visit the websites of the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) and NHS Scotland's Fit for Travel or call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Hurricanes/Floodings

The rainy season in Costa Rica normally runs from May to November, coinciding with the hurricane season in the Caribbean. Flooding can occur and heavy rains or hurricanes can cause landslides (though roads are normally cleared quickly). Heavy rainfall and strong winds were experienced over parts of the country following Tropical Storm Alma in May 2008, resulting in four fatalities and damage to many homes and road. A state of emergency was declared in 23 parts of the country. Local relief efforts to recover from the damage have now been largely successful.

You should monitor local and international weather updates from the World Meteorological Organisation and the US National Hurricane Centre.

Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions

There is the possibility in Costa Rica of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The last earthquake which caused damage in Costa Rica was in 1993, and the country experiences significant tremors from time to time.

Costa Rica has 16 volcanoes, four of which are considered active (Arenal, Poás, Irazú and Rincón de la Vieja). Although there has not been serious or widespread damage caused by any of these for many years the possibility of eruptions always exists. You should follow instructions in the national parks. Do not go into the prohibited areas, which are clearly signposted. Any warnings should be heeded seriously.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We strongly recommend that you obtain comprehensive travel and medical insurance before travelling. You should check any exclusions, and that your policy covers you for the activities you want to undertake.

MEDICAL HISTORY AND ADVICE

It is vitally important that you advise us prior to departure of any medical or dietary condition relating to any member of your party so that we may notify our local staff before you arrive. We recommend only drinking bottled water from bottles with unbroken seals although you are able to drink the tap water in most areas.

LOCAL TRAVEL

If you are visiting jungle areas you should be accompanied by experienced local guides.

If visiting volcanoes please pay strict attention to notices prohibiting entry to dangerous areas. When there is the danger of eruptions the national park is closed to visitors until the danger has passed.

Emergency Contact Numbers:

Police Emergency - 911
Ambulance – 911 or 128
Fire Service – 911 or 118
Police Investigative Service – 911 or 2221-5337

SEA AND RIVER SAFETY

Swimming

You should take special care when swimming from all beaches in Costa Rica but especially on the Atlantic coast. Rip tides are very common. There are normally no lifeguards. You should seek reliable local advice. You should also be aware that there has been a considerable increase in the number of crocodiles seen along the Pacific Coast near the beaches popular with surfers (from Playa Azul down to Playa Esterillos) and there have been two reported attacks in September 2008.

Sea and River Travel

Safety features on small boats are not always of a good standard. If you plan white water rafting, you should arrange this with an established company.

LOCAL LAWS AND CUSTOMS

You should not get involved with drugs of any kind in any way as drug trafficking is dealt with severely. Despite what people may say, the authorities are well trained and perceptive. The minimum sentence is eight years imprisonment.

CRIME

There has been an increase in crime against tourists over the past few years in Costa Rica. Opportunistic theft of personal belongings, passports and travel documents is the main problem. However, there has also been an increase in incidents of violent crime against tourists. Gang muggings and armed robberies can occur even in daylight on busy streets.

You can reduce the risk of becoming a victim:

- Do not wear jewellery or carry large amounts of cash. Avoid street moneychangers and avoid stopping in poorly lit or low-populated areas to make telephone calls or seek directions.
- Watch your belongings carefully at all times and in all places.
- Be particularly careful of your belongings when staying in hostels and hotels. It is important that you lock valuable belongings, passports and travel documents in hotel safes where possible. You should only leave your belongings in a safe for which you retain control of the key. Keep the key on your person.
- You should be vigilant when using buses. Theft of bags from overhead compartments inside buses is a common problem and efficiently carried out. Thieves have simple but effective ways of distracting a target.
- Be particularly watchful of your valuables at the beach and in popular tourist destinations.
- Avoid leaving unattended drinks in bars and places of entertainment. There have been reports of "spiked" drinks resulting in assault and theft.

- Only take official taxis. Avoid using unofficial taxis – 'taxi piratas' - as several violent incidents involving tourists have been reported. Official taxis are red with a triangular sticker and plastic box on the roof with the name and number of the taxi company. Where possible use radio-dispatched taxis. When getting into a taxi, ensure that the driver's identification number, name and photograph are clearly visible on the dashboard, and ensure that the driver indicates the meter.

Personal attacks, including rape and other sexual offences, are still infrequent in Costa Rica, but there has been increasing occurrences in the last couple of years. You are advised to maintain at least the same level of personal security awareness as in the UK. We strongly advise lone visitors, in particular, never to accept lifts from strangers or passing acquaintances at any time.

Theft of, and from, cars is common. Be particularly careful about leaving your valuables in hire cars and avoid leaving your belongings visible from outside the car. It is a good idea to park in paid car parks, which have an attendant watching your vehicle. Otherwise, park in well-lit or busy areas. Use the car alarm, if fitted. There have been incidents where slashed tyres have given thieves the opportunity to "assist" in changing tyres, while an accomplice steals from the car. There has also been an increase in armed attacks on tourists leaving the airport in hire cars.

There has also been an increase in the number of short-term and opportunistic kidnapping, called "express kidnapping", occurring in Costa Rica. Victims are normally selected at random and are forced at gunpoint to withdraw money from ATMs. Once the ransom is paid the victim is usually quickly released.

AIRPORT PARKING, HOTELS AND LOUNGES

You can book airport parking, hotels and lounges at very reasonable prices on our website at:

Car Parking: <http://secure.holidayextras.co.uk/activitiesabroad-parking>

Hotels: <http://secure.holidayextras.co.uk/activitiesabroad-hotels>

Lounges: <http://secure.holidayextras.co.uk/activitiesabroad-lounges>

TOURIST BOARD

The official website of the Costa Rica tourist Board is: <http://www.visitcostarica.com>

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM POLICY

Responsible travel is about holidays that respect destinations and local people. If you or your tour operator use local suppliers rather than large chains then the likelihood is that your money will be far more effective in stimulating local economies, the employment base and other projects.

An Independent Company

We are proudly independent. We believe that our beneficiaries should be our employees, our customers and our suppliers, not corporate shareholders.

As long-standing members of Responsible Travel, we aim to ensure that our holidays benefit the communities and environments we visit. We also believe that we have a responsibility to our employees and the region in which they live too.

Economic Responsibility

We firmly believe that the communities and areas to which we send our clients should benefit economically. The very nature of our holidays means that we operate for the main part in remote rural and coastal areas where employment can be limited. Hence, wherever possible we use local accommodation, transport and activity providers. This enables local economies to benefit directly and helps to generate incomes and employment in areas where the drift might be towards cities and towns.

Our policy is to use local or family run hotels and guesthouses, steering away from organisations whose beneficiaries are shareholders and senior management.

Environmental Responsibility

We wish to maintain the natural settings in which we work, not just for the future of our company, but also for future generations. Hence, we insist that our local providers are equally conscious of this need. We ensure that all litter is removed from any of our activity sites. Where it is feasible, we strongly encourage group transfers, reducing the volume of road traffic and make our clients aware of their obligation to the environment and local communities.

Social Responsibility – at home and away

We fully appreciate the impact of tourist visits on local communities and residents and strive to ensure that we are having a positive effect. Hence, as stated above, we always use locally owned providers with the aim of distributing the financial benefits throughout the local economy.

We encourage our clients to respect the lives of local inhabitants by learning a few important words: hello, goodbye, please, thank you, etc and where possible to become involved in local events and learn about their lives.

We purposely chose to base our offices in a converted farmhouse in rural Northumberland. By doing so, we have helped to provide employment in a region where rural diversity is at the heart of economic development.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Yes	Si
No	No
Please	Por favor
Thank You	Gracias
Good Morning	Buenas dias
Good Afternoon	Beunas tardes
Good Night	Buenas noches
Hello / Hi	Hola
Goodbye	Adios
Do you speak English?	Habla ingles?
I don't understand	No entiendo
Milk	Leche
Coffee	Café
Sugar	Azucar
Water	Agua
Watermelon	Sandia
Pineapple	Piña
Orange	Naranja
Banana	Platano-Banano
Bread	Pan
Wine	Vino
Chicken	Pollo
Fish	Pescado
The bill please	La cuenta, por favor
Beer	Cerveza

Please Note: The information given in this trip dossier covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Please refer to the foreign office website for more up to date information on your chosen destination. Abnormal conditions or events beyond our control can prevail at any time, therefore all holidays can be subject to unexpected changes. In order to enjoy and be safe in all activities you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.

Up to date: 03 November 2008