



# Travel Information for Costa Rica

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- B. Timeline Checklist
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## Weather Data Websites

View historical weather information for your destination.

- [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)
- [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)
- [www.eurometeo.com](http://www.eurometeo.com)

## Flight & Travel Websites

View itineraries to book your trip.

- [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)
- [www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com)
- [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com)
- [www.flylowcostairlines.org](http://www.flylowcostairlines.org)
- [www.yapta.com](http://www.yapta.com) (to track flight prices)
- [www.seatguru.com](http://www.seatguru.com) or [www.seatexpert.com](http://www.seatexpert.com) (for seat selection)

## Currency Conversion Websites

View exchange rates for local currencies. Costa Rica's currency is the colon CRC.

- [www.xe.com/ucc/](http://www.xe.com/ucc/)
- [www.oanda.com/convert/classic](http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic)

## A. Travel and Transportation

### Passport and Visa

**You need a passport. Check yours today to see that it is valid for at least six months beyond the date you intend to return to the U.S.** You can obtain application and renewal forms for a U.S. passport on-line at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) or at a local Post Office. It can take up to six weeks to receive your passport. American, Canadian, UK and EU passport holders do not need a visa to visit Costa Rica for periods of less than three months. If you are considering staying for more than ninety days you must file for a stay extension at the Immigration Department of Costa Rica. Or, you can exit Costa Rica and re-enter. One option is to visit Nicaragua or Panama - Costa Rica's neighboring countries - for a day and come back into Costa Rica. (Note: A \$20.00 U.S. dollar fine will be charged upon departure from Costa Rica if you overstayed your permitted length in the country.)

### Booking your Flights

We suggest you book your homebound flight for the day after the tour ends since our shuttles back to San José arrive in the mid to late afternoon.

#### Tips for booking flights:

- Search the web. Be sure to review their policies for restrictions and cancellation penalties.
- Contact your travel agent. A good agent can help you find a competitive fare. He or she will charge a fee for this service.

#### Travel Consultant Recommendation

Karen Hopf of New Horizons Travel in Fort Collins, CO can assist you with your flights, and pre and post tour travel arrangements. Including the Getting To and Away document (GTA.pdf) for your tour as an email attachment when contacting her is an easy way to share your ExperiencePlus! tour starting and ending information.

Karen Hopf  
New Horizons Travel  
Email: [karenh@travelnewhorizons.com](mailto:karenh@travelnewhorizons.com)  
Telephone: 970 223 1135  
Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm MST  
[www.travelnewhorizons.com](http://www.travelnewhorizons.com)

To search for consolidator fares with a Latin American specialist try Exitto Travel at [www.exitotravel.com](http://www.exitotravel.com)

## VAT (Value Added Tax) Refunds

The VAT collected on purchases is included in the price that you pay for an item, but there is a system that allows tourists to receive a refund. The time to decide if you want to pursue the VAT refund is at the time of purchase, not after you return home. We have provided links to websites that provide general information on VAT along with rate and minimum requirement charts to help you to decide if it is worth your time to pursue the refund. Keep in mind that both the VAT rate and the minimum amount for the expenditure (per shop) vary per country. If you choose to pursue the refund at your departure airport, remember to bring all of your paper work and allow enough time prior to your flight to stop at the Customs office to complete the process. If your vendor works with a refund service such as [Global Blue](#) or [Premier Tax Free](#), then stop by their respective refund desk. Expect to receive your refund in local currency. If your merchant does not work with such a service, you will need to contact the merchant for your refund either from the airport or from home.

For general information on VAT: [www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/vat.htm](http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/vat.htm)  
[www.reidsguides.com/t\\_mo/t\\_mo\\_vat.html](http://www.reidsguides.com/t_mo/t_mo_vat.html)

## Major airlines with services to Costa Rica include:

- American 800-433-7300 [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com)
- Continental 800-523-3273 [www.continental.com](http://www.continental.com)
- Delta 800-325-1999 [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com)
- TACA 800-400-TACA (8222) [www.grupotaca.com](http://www.grupotaca.com)
- United 800-241-6522 [www.ual.com](http://www.ual.com)
- U.S. Airways 800-428-4322 [www.usairways.com](http://www.usairways.com)
- Frontier 800-432-1359 [www.frontierairlines.com](http://www.frontierairlines.com)
- Jet Blue 1-800-JETBLUE (538-2583) [www.jetblue.com](http://www.jetblue.com)
- Spirit 800-772-7117 [www.spiritair.com](http://www.spiritair.com)

## Airport Transportation Information

### San José

Name and airport code: Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO); located 23km west of San José and 3 km south of Alajuela.  
Website: [www.azworldairports.com/airports/a1410sjo.cfm](http://www.azworldairports.com/airports/a1410sjo.cfm)

San José is Costa Rica's capital and is the central point for tour departures, local transportation, and air travel. Therefore, it will be necessary for you to return to San José at the conclusion of your tour. For example, if you plan to fly to Quepos (Manuel Antonio National Park) after the tour, you cannot fly from Carillo Beach/ Sámara to Manuel Antonio without first going to San José and then taking a flight to Manuel Antonio. Exceptions to this are the shuttle services that connect most tourist destinations in the country, and new direct flights between Tamarindo, Manuel Antonio, and La Fortuna.

### **To and From the Airport:**

By taxi: After clearing customs at the airport, look for the "Taxis Unidos" booth on the left side of the exit. This is the only official taxi company and the cashiers speak English. Tell them where you're going and pay for the trip. You'll get a receipt and be directed to your cab in a very organized way. Expect to pay \$10 - \$12 US for a 10-minute trip to the Orquideas Inn in Alajuela and \$20 - \$30 US to downtown San José.

### **Airport Departure Tax**

A departure tax of US \$26 (Juan Santamaría International Airport) must be paid at the airport by passengers leaving Costa Rica. This can be paid in colones or U.S. dollars. You can also pay by credit card but be aware that this tax may be treated as a "cash advance" by some credit card companies, so you might be charged additional fees.

### Liberia

Name and airport code: Daniel Oduber International Airport (LIR)

### **To and From the Airport:**

An increasing number of flights from the US are using this airport located in the city of Liberia about 4 hours (220 km) north-west of San José. Transportation to/from Liberia airport to our tour starting and ending points can be arranged by our office in Costa Rica. Contact our country coordinator Mario Cordero at: [mario@experienceplus.com](mailto:mario@experienceplus.com) or send him a fax at 011-506-2479-9840. Please remember to provide all of your information including

## VoIP Phone Calls

Make free (computer to computer) and low-cost (computer to phone) calls with VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). Try Skype ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)), Google Talk ([www.google.com/talk/](http://www.google.com/talk/)), or VoipBuster ([www.voipbuster.com](http://www.voipbuster.com)).

## Travel Language Guides

Learn the lingo with WorldNomads' language guides. Foreign language podcasts are available for free downloads to your iPod or mp3 player. iPhone apps are available for purchase. Visit <http://journals.worldnomads.com/language-guides>

## Immunizations

Immunizations are not required to travel to Costa Rica from the USA or Canada. If you are coming from South America or the Caribbean, you may need a yellow fever vaccine; check with your local health department for more information. If you have special health concerns, speak with your doctor or contact the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta at (800) 311-3435 or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

flight numbers and times and an e-mail address where you can receive a confirmation.

## Air Travel within Costa Rica

### Sansa Air

Website: [www.flysansa.com](http://www.flysansa.com)

[sansareservations@taca.com](mailto:sansareservations@taca.com) Tel: +506-2290-4100

Toll free from USA: 1-877-767-2672

We suggest using Sansa Air for air travel within Costa Rica because it services the Juan Santamaría International Airport in San José. (Note that it is a 400m walk from the Sansa terminal to the international terminal.) While there are other domestic airlines, note that many of these flights will arrive at the Tobías Bolaños National Airport in San José, which is a 25 minute taxi ride from the Juan Santamaría International Airport.

### Nature Air

Website: [www.natureair.com](http://www.natureair.com)

[reservations@natureair.com](mailto:reservations@natureair.com)

Tel: +506-2299-6000

Toll Free USA/Canada: (800) 235-9272

Nature Air claims to be the first carbon neutral airline in the world. It flies to the Tobías Bolaños Airport in San José. (Note that there is a 25 minute taxi ride to the SJO International Airport where most international flights leave from.)

## Other Types of Transportation

### Taxis:

At the San José International Airport we advise you to use the orange taxis with drivers in uniform. At the airport exit, on the left side, there is a booth for "Taxis Unidos", the only official taxi company. We recommend you use these and not any of the other informal taxi drivers that will approach you. The cashiers speak English and you can pay for the taxi ride in US dollars. Tell them where you're going and pay for the trip. You'll get a receipt and be directed to your cab in a very organized way. In the rest of the country, official taxis are red and have a yellow triangle with the license number on the doors. It is good practice to ask for an approximate fare *before* the ride and pay meter start. Keep in mind that the cost may vary depending on traffic in the city.

### Private Transfers:

Private transfers are a very convenient way to move around before or after your tour. This is a door to door service, you choose the departure time, stops and side trips can always be arranged in advance or simply coordinated along the way. Prices are surprisingly reasonable and you have all the flexibility.

### Shuttles:

This is not a public bus, but a scheduled daily or even twice daily service in comfortable, air conditioned vehicles. Generally a 12-passenger van is adapted to transfer up to 8 people with luggage. Shuttles are non-smoking and your luggage always travels inside the van. They will make at least one

### Passport Photocopies

Carry a copy with you, separate from your passport, and leave another copy with someone at home.

### Credit Card Photocopy

Carry a copy in a safe place with you.

### Insurance Information

Bring health and travel insurance policy numbers and phone numbers. Toll free numbers will not work internationally so bring the regular published number

### Safety Information for Traveling

- Be careful of pickpockets and purse snatching --

Do not wear valuable or showy jewelry and keep your wallet somewhere safe. Use common sense as you would in any large city.

- Keep a watchful eye on your personal belongings; never leave your luggage unattended. It takes seconds for someone to steal your things. Keep important documents such as passports, licenses, and money in a waist belt or passport holder around your neck. You can purchase these from your local discount retailer or specialty

mandatory 15 minute stop at a pre-defined spot, usually a souvenir store or restaurant with clean bathrooms. On some routes you must change buses at this stop.

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## B. Timeline Checklist to Prepare for your Tour

### Upon Booking

- Check your passport. For US residents the expiration date should extend six months past your date of return to the US.
- Purchase trip cancellation/interruption insurance within 14 days of booking to comply with time sensitive coverage clauses. Visit our Travel and Planning Information Page for more information [www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo](http://www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo).
- Submit your *Customer Information Form* on-line. Access the form at [www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo/tourcif](http://www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo/tourcif).
- Start checking air fare. Contact us to see if your departure is guaranteed to run before you reserve a nonrefundable flight.

### 2 - 4 Months Prior to Departure

- Reserve your flights if you have not yet done so.
- Plan your pre and post-tour transportation. Refer to the *Getting To and Away* (an email attachment named GTA) for details. Bring this with you on the plane.
- Reserve your pre and post-tour extra hotel nights. The hotel contact information is in your *Getting To and Away* (an email attachment named GTA).
- Evaluate your conditioning and begin training using our Joel Friel Bicycle Program available on our Travel and Planning Information Page. [www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo](http://www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo).
- Final payments are due 90 days prior to departure. Refer to your *Deposit Payment Letter* and *Final Payment Reminder* email for details.

### 2 - 4 weeks Prior to Departure

- Review your flight and other transportation tickets and extra night hotels reservations.
- Refer to the *Bicycle Tour Packing List* available on our Travel and Planning Information Page at [www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo](http://www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo) and verify your packing needs.
- Distribute the *Hotel Itinerary* attached to your Final Mailing email to a responsible person so they can reach you in an emergency.

### Day of Your Flight

- Make sure you have your tour specific *Getting To and Away* (an email attachment named GTA) that provides our staff contact numbers and meeting time and location.
- Drink plenty of water and little or no caffeine or alcohol to help reduce jetlag and try to get as much sleep as possible.
- Have a great trip, smile and we will see you there!

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## C. While There

### Currency and Banking Information



travel/luggage shop.

### International Time Zone

Costa Rica time is six hours behind Greenwich Mean Time or equivalent to U.S. Central time. There is no daylight saving time. The sun rises at approximately 5:30 a.m. and sets around 6:00 p.m.

### Credit Cards

Visa is the most widely accepted card in Costa Rica, followed by American Express and MasterCard.

### Electrical Appliances

Electric current in Costa Rica is 110V as in the U.S. and Canada with electrical polarized plugs (2 flat prongs one being wider than the other. In some older buildings you may find non-polarized outlets (two flat prongs of the same size) and for those you will need an adaptor. Adapters can be found at a hardware or travel store.

### Bicycle Safety - Wear your Helmet Always

Be sure your bicycle helmet is properly adjusted to correctly fit your head and wear it always when you bicycle.

Even though you may pay a fee, you usually get the best exchange rate using ATM machines for ready cash. Check with your bank to be sure that your standard PIN number will work, as some cards require an international PIN. Many towns along the tour have ATM machines, but fewer towns have places to change dollars. Most of our customers withdraw or change money two - three times during the trip. We suggest withdrawing or changing \$300 at your arrival airport. Be aware that some machines limit the amount you can withdraw. Changing money in Cost Rica will get you a better exchange rate than if you change money in the U.S.

Use your credit card for major shopping, restaurant meals in large towns, and for hotels outside of the tour. VISA is most commonly accepted, followed by Master Card and American Express. You can pay in US dollars in some cases, but with smaller denominations only. Expect change in colones, and at a lower exchange rate than available at banks.

Most hotels (including our starting hotels) will exchange a limited amount of cash (at a slightly lower rate than banks).

### Dialing Telephone Numbers

The components of the telephone number are:

- **International Access Code** (sometimes called Exit Code) for the country from which you are calling (IAC).
- **Country code** for the country that you are calling (CC).
- **Local number** (LN). Costa Rican local numbers are 8 digits in length, the digits that follow the country code are the telephone number.
- **+ sign**. Central American telephone numbers are often written with a + sign preceding the number. This presentation is a convenient method of providing the Country Code with the telephone number. When dialing, replace the + sign with the IAC. Most cell phones allow for use of the + sign.
- **Trunk Code** is a digit (usually a zero) that is placed in front of the telephone number and is used only when dialing domestically within Central America. This digit must be omitted when dialing from US or Canada.

**Example:** +506-2479-7150 or 011-506-2479-7150

***The International Access (Exit) Code for the US and Canada is 011.***

***The International Access (Exit) Code for Costa Rica is 00.***

***The Country Code for Costa Rica is 506.***

***The Country Code for the US and Canada is 1.***

**To call Costa Rica from the US or Canada, dial IAC + CC + LN.**

The local telephone number of Mario Cordero, our Costa Rica country coordinator, is 2479-7150. The number could also be listed as +506-2479-7150. In both cases, you would dial 011-506-2479-7150.

Most VoIP calling systems and cell phones allow you to omit dialing the IAC 011. Check to see how your system or phone works for international calling.

**To call the US or Canada from Costa Rica, dial IAC + CC + LN.**

The local telephone number of the ExperiencePlus! headquarters in Colorado is 970-484-8489. You would dial 00-1-970-484-8489.

## Hotel Check-in and Check-out

Hotel check out time in Costa Rica varies, but is typically around noon. Check-in time is around 2-3 p.m., occasionally your room may be ready early.

Hotels are required to log passport information for each traveler so the front desk will ask you for your passport when you check in. As a convenience to you, ExperiencePlus! provides this information to the front desk while you are traveling with us on tour.

**ATM's** are common in medium to large size cities.

## Sightseeing in San José:

**National Museum** is open Tuesday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and has a large collection of Pre-Columbian art. It is located on the plaza at Calle 17 and Avenida Central.

**National Theatre** is a national treasure and an architectural showpiece. It is located on the south side of Plaza de la Cultura on Avenida 2, Calles 3 & 5.

**Jade Museum** houses the largest Pre-Columbian jade collection in the Americas. Open Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. Located on the

## To call Costa Rica from within Costa Rica, dial LN

The local telephone number of Mario Cordero, our Costa Rica country coordinator, is 2479-7150. You would dial 2479-7150. Unlike the US there is no need to differentiate local and long distance by dialing a 1.

## Traveling with your Cell Phone

Until early 2011 there was only one Phone Company in Costa Rica. It is called ICE and it is owned by the state.

Although two new companies are about to start operating ICE still has the only functional cell phone network in the country. They have an agreement with the following providers in the USA, although you may have to call your service provider to have roaming “turned on”.

- ❖ Cincinnati Bell Wireless
  - ❖ Cingular Wireless
  - ❖ Sprint / Nextel
  - ❖ SunCom Wireless
  - ❖ T-Mobile
- You will need a 3G or 4G phone with a minimum bandwidth of 1800MHz. Most new cell phones meet this requirement.
  - Once you have a capable phone, you will need to have international roaming turned on by your service provider. Please remember you will be charged for both outgoing and incoming phone calls and charges range from \$1 - \$4 per minute.
  - You can now buy prepaid SIM cards in Costa Rica, both from ICE or other companies. You can find them at the airport before you leave the customs hall or in many shops all over the country. All of them allow you to receive international calls without using up your prepaid credit. To use these cards your phone must be “unblocked”.
  - The least expensive option to call home is to buy a local prepaid calling card. The most popular are called “199” or “Viajera”. You scratch the back and find a pin number that allows you to make calls from fixed or cell phones at standard long distance rates which range from \$0.25 to \$0.35 per minute. Again, using these calling cards does not use up your prepaid phone credit.

There are several companies in Costa Rica that rent cell phones. We don't recommend using them anymore as their prices are high and many other options are available.

Mobal International Cell Phones [www.mobal.com](http://www.mobal.com) offers international phones, SIM cards, and international phone service with no monthly plan or fee. The minutes do not expire and you pay for only the minutes used. Minutes can be added by credit card. If you already have a GSM cell phone you can purchase only the SIM card.

Before you travel with your cell phone please check with your cell phone provider and make sure you know the answers to these questions:

1. Is my cell phone 3G or 4G?
2. If yes, is roaming turned on and can I use it abroad or can I “unlock” the phone?
3. What are the international calling and/or data plan options and fees for the country(ies) I am traveling in?

11<sup>th</sup> floor of the National Insurance Institute (Calle 9, Avenida 7)

**Central Market** is a great place to see an authentic market, but watch for pickpockets. Located at Calle 6 and Avenida Central and 1st.

**City Walking Tour – Chepe Cletas** offers a 2 hour walking tour of San Jose  
[www.chepecletas.com/2010/10/servicios.html](http://www.chepecletas.com/2010/10/servicios.html)

### Drinking Water

Costa Rican cities and towns have excellent public water supplies. It is safe to drink the water in most of the cities and towns and in all of our hotels. If that doesn't appeal to you, there's plenty of bottled water and drinks available en route. Rarely do visitors to Costa Rica experience health problems from water, but if you are in doubt about the water quality, speak to your tour leaders or buy bottled water.

The best prevention against digestive problems is washing your hands with water and soap before eating. Using an alcohol gel hand sanitizer is the next best thing.

### Language Lessons:

#### Bicycle Vocabulary & Directions

- Tire - *la llanta* ("yanta")
- I have a flat tire - *la llanta se pinchó*
- Brakes - *los frenos*
- Bike pump - *el inflador*
- To the right - *a la derecha*
- To the left - *a la*

## Eating and Drinking

Costa Rica has no shortage of economical, nutritious and tasty foods. When paying your bill (*la cuenta*) in a restaurant, take notice that it includes a 23% tax (13% sales + 10% service tax). It is not necessary to tip extra, but that is up to you.

**Breakfast** (*desayuno*) typically consists of *gallo pinto* – white rice and black beans served with or without *huevos fritos/revueltos* (fried or scrambled eggs) and sometimes *natilla* (sour cream). There is always fruit, tortillas and bread. And of course coffee.

For a convenient, regional **lunch** (*almuerzo*) on the road, order up a *casado* - the daily special of rice, beans, fried plantains (*platanos fritos*), option of meat (*carne*), chicken (*pollo*), fish (*pescado*), pork chop (*chuleta*) and a salad (*ensalada*). For picnics, cheese and meat sandwiches are available at stores called sodas or *pulperías*.

**Snacks**, snacks, snacks. You're choices are endless. Fruits are plentiful. We recommend you buy the kind you peel. Do not buy fruits already peeled to street vendors! You can purchase water, sodas, candies, chips, cookies, and some fruits at a soda or *pulpería*.

**Dinner** (*la cena*) is similar to lunch. Most restaurant menus don't change throughout the day. Seafood, chicken and beef commonly accompany a range of tubers, beans, rice, and cabbage salad.

#### Other food items of interest:

*bocas* – appetizers. In "Tico" bars, *bocas* usually arrive when you order beer (*cerveza*). You might receive *gallos* (tortillas piled with meat, chicken, beans or cheese), *ceviche* (a sort of marinated raw seafood salad), or *tamales* (boiled cornmeal pasties wrapped in banana leaves).

*confites* – candy

*arreglados* – puff pastries stuffed with meat or cheese

*empanadas* – Chilean-style turnovers stuffed with meat or cheese

*patacones* – plantains deep-fried like French Fried potatoes

*olla de carne* – a beef and veggie soup

*yuca* – a tasty tuber, great fried

#### Fruits:

*naranja* – orange

*banano* – banana

*mora* – blackberry

*papaya* – papaya

*fresa* – strawberry

*piña* – pineapple

*mango* – mango

*melón* – cantaloupe

*carambola* – starfruit

*guayaba* – it's sweet!

#### Drinks

*Agua* – water is safe to drink from the tap in San José and other major towns, though we recommend you do what makes you feel most comfortable. The water in our hotels is safe to drink. Purified water (agua

*izquierda* (“eez-key-ER-da”)

- Straight ahead - *derecho*
- Forward - *directo*

## How to Say Vowels in Spanish:

A – “ah” as in pasta

E – “ay” as in tray

I – “ee” as in feet

O – “oh” as in crow

U – “oo” as in moon

## Polite phrases

- Thank you - *Gracias!*
- Thank you very much -  
• *Muchas gracias!*
- You’re welcome (literally with pleasure) - *Con mucho gusto*  
Sometimes you’ll hear, *por nada, no es nada, para servirle* (it’s nothing, my pleasure)  
After a “thank you,”
- Hello - *Hola!*
- Goodbye (and hello) - *Adiós*. You’ll often hear folks shout “adios!” as you ride through the country.
- An all encompassing phrase meaning, “cool,” “ok,” or “great” - *Pura vida*
- When you need to pass by someone on the street, or squeeze through a crowd, use: *Con permiso*. In reply, you’ll hear: *Pase, adelante* which means, “go ahead.”
- Excuse me - *Disculpe* (“dis-COOL-pay”) –. It’s good to say this to someone before you ask a question. For example. “*Disculpe Señora. Dónde está el servicio?*” (Excuse me, where is the bathroom?) *Disculpe*

*purificada* or *en botella*) is readily available in sodas or *pulperías*.

*Gaseosas* – soft drinks come in cans or plastic bottles. Make sure you put the empty bottle in the right container for recycling

*Café* – coffee – is strong like espresso. *Café con leche* – coffee with milk – is more like a latte. *Café americano* is the closest you’ll find to a regular cuppa Joe.

*Frescos naturales* – these fruit drinks will change your world. When ordering, say the fruit(s) you want, “en”, and then “agua” or “leche”. For example: “*Un fresco con fresa y banano en leche, por favor.*” A strawberry and banana fruit drink with milk.

*vino* – wine

*cerveza* – beer

*Café Rica* – liqueur like Kahlua

## Personal Care

### Restrooms (WC) Along the Route

We design our routes to pass through villages and towns to give you the opportunity to locate *cafés* or “*pulperías*” (small shops) when in need of a bathroom, called *el servicio*, or *el baño*. However, it may not always be possible and in some situations you may need to use the “green door” (outdoors).

If you stop at a local *café* or shop, please note that it is a common practice and an expected courtesy to purchase a small item such as bottled water, coffee, or a snack when utilizing their facilities. It may be useful to carry some tissue with you, since not all public restrooms have toilet paper. Folks often stop at a bar for a mid-morning beverage, use the bathroom and fill their water bottles from the tap.

### Laundry Facilities

Costa Rica has few do-it-yourself Laundromats. You will find some in popular tourist destinations such as La Fortuna. Other than that there is laundry service at most hotels, which costs more but solves the problem of wet clothes that never (really never! and can take on an odor) dry out in the very humid environment of the rainforest. If you wish, you can bring detergent and a portable laundry line, (any nylon rope will do), and wash things out in your room.

### Hair dryers

Some of our hotels have hair dryers in the room, and others have them available at the front desk. If you use a hair dryer regularly, we recommend you bring your own. Bring the correct electrical adaptor and or convertor.

## Tipping Guidelines

### Tipping in restaurants

Wait staff in Costa Rica are paid a salaried wage plus 10% of the total of your bill. This 10% is mandatory by law and is always included in the final bill even if the waiter tells you otherwise. Exceptions to this are family run sodas and small restaurants where they don’t have paid staff. With this in mind, leaving an additional tip for good service is still appreciated. Remember that quick service isn’t customary in Costa Rican restaurants—it is not the waiters fault if things move more slowly than you are used to—Costa Ricans enjoy leisurely meals! A 5-10% additional tip for good service



is also handy to use when you do something like step on someone's toe or sneeze.

- To your health, more or less - *Salud*. Say this when someone sneezes.
- Take care! - *Que le vaya bien!* Say this upon leaving stores, restaurants, etc., as a kind, parting phrase. In response you'll hear and will want to say,
- Thanks! Same to you. - *Gracias! Igualmente*
- Go on (as in, "go on, take the bananas, they're yours," or, "go on, no problem, you don't need to thank me," or, "go on, get going, you don't have all day!") You'll hear this word used in a variety of situations. Train your ear for it. - *Vaya*
- If God wills it - *Si Dios quiere*. . This phrase frequently compliments desired future action. One vecina (neighbor) says to the other, "*Nos vemos mañana*" (we'll see each other tomorrow). The other vecina responds, "*Si dios quiere*." Again, train your ear for it.
- The formal "you." In Spanish, "you" comes in three forms. If you have to remember one, remember *Usted*. For example, "*Usted vive aqui?*" (Do you live here?) - *Usted*
- We sell or For Sale - *Se vende*

is acceptable.

### **Tippling Your Tour Leaders**

When we are asked for guidelines on tipping we suggest \$50 - \$75 (the equivalent in local currency if possible) per person, per tour leader (an average of \$7 to \$10 per day). \$25 to \$50 is appropriate for your driver. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage customers to tip as individuals and not as a customer group effort. If you feel your tour leader team has not done their job well, please let us know.

