



COSTA RICA WILDLIFE ADVENTURE

A tour for serious nature loving enthusiasts!

wildside
for travel less ordinary

02 – 22 October 2025



COSTA RICA WILDLIFE ADVENTURE – 2025

INTRODUCTION

For a tiny country, Costa Rica packs a huge wildlife punch. Containing 5% of the world's biodiversity, its thick forests teem with life, from brightly coloured toucans to slow-moving sloths. With adventure and beautiful beaches to boot, this 21-day trip won't disappoint

This is a focused wildlife tour arranged and escorted by Wildside Travel. A 21-day sojourn into Central America via Chile and Peru. Stopovers enroute to San Jose is Santiago outbound and Lima on the return journey. This affords some respite from the long-haul flights and dips a toe into two more unique South American cultures and vibrant cities to round out all the colourful experiences!

TOUR INFORMATION

The country is a haven for nature lovers, and we'll make the most of its national parks and rainforests, spending most of our time outdoors and on our feet, so a good level of fitness and a love for nature is a must.

We'll spend plenty of time in nature, trying to spot some of Costa Rica's most elusive species. While our experienced tour leaders will help us be on the lookout, wildlife is unpredictable, and we might not always have luck on our side

TRAVEL COMFORT

Costa Rica might be small but there's plenty to see. The pace of this tour is graded as moderate, and we'll be moving quickly to pack in all the highlights. There will be long drives on some days, necessary to connect all the dots.

The trip will be a comfortable sized group tour with a maximum 14 tour members – travelling and exploring from the comfort of a luxury vehicle with optional activity in several locations offering something for everyone.

WEATHER

While it's hot and humid year-round, green season (from May to November) will be wetter with periods of heavy rain. The rainy climate makes the country's famous greenery even more luscious and lures out the wildlife, too.

While we'll get our fill of the Costa Rican sun, we'll also spend a few days at high altitude where it can get chilly, packing a couple of warm layers is recommended. To get the most out of the destination, come prepared. Essentials to pack include comfortable shoes, insect repellent, sunblock, swimming suit, short and long pants, waterproof shoes and layers, and binoculars.

MONEY

Costa Rica is more expensive than its Latin American neighbours and our itinerary includes the opportunity to enjoy optional extras that, if you wish to take part, you'll need to budget for these. Please refer to the budget and packing section for more information.

GROUND OPERATOR AND TOUR LEADER

Our ground operator will be Explore Worldwide, who 44 years ago were the ground breakers for providing safe and exciting access to wilderness areas, outdoor activity and rustic experiences for older travellers and to this day remain legendary! Wildside has had a long association with the Explore-style and their evolution in outdoor travel tourism over many decades. Please note we are joining a *scheduled departure* so other travellers will be present on this trip.

The Explore Tour Leaders are the key to the success of the company; they are local experts who are bursting with first-hand knowledge which they love to share, and their unique insights will bring the destination to life. Your Tour Leader will be on hand throughout your tour to make sure arrangements run smoothly, to organise all the local logistics and to keep you safe. Your Tour Leader should be your first point of contact if you encounter any difficulties or disappointments in country – please raise any concerns, however small, with your Tour Leader as they are best placed to assist you.

MAP



ITINERARY: COSTA RICA WILDLIFE ADVENTURE

02 OCT Day 1 – Depart for Santiago

Arrive at the City of Santiago for a 2 night stop.

Transfer to central 4* hotel and settle in before stepping out to enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

03 OCT Day 2 – Santiago Half Day Guided Tour (B)

Explore this vibrant city on a 4 hour lux coach trip to see the city layout with a good balance between walks and drives, allowing you to find interesting areas not always visited by tours. Local snack included.

Downtime for own explorations. Evening dinner reservation.

04 OCT Day 3

Day 1 – Depart for San Jose (B)

Early flight departure to Lima for a short leg-stretch then the final leg into Juan Santamaria Airport (SJO) and Costa Rica's cosmopolitan capital late afternoon. A 30-minute drive into our hotel. Lying in a fertile valley, at an altitude of 1,150 metres, coffee and sugar are big industries here - coffee is even planted between buildings and along the roadsides on the outskirts of the city. Our tour leader will meet us at the hotel for a welcome and later we'll go out for dinner.

05 OCT Day 4 - Visit the Poas Volcano, explore San Jose including a Toucan Rescue Ranch (B)

This morning, we'll head to Poas Volcano National Park (a one-hour drive away), where you can spot the smoke from one of Costa Rica's most active volcanos rising majestically from the tropical rainforest. At almost a mile in diameter and 314 metres deep, the main crater is one of the largest in the world. It's erupted 40 times since 1828, most recently in April 2017. Due to recent volcanic activity, time at the crater viewpoint is restricted to 20 minutes. If activity increases again, the authorities may choose to close the park - in that case, we'll visit the Doka coffee estate instead for a tasting session of Costa Rica's finest export.

After our visit to Poas, we'll return to San Jose, calling first at a Toucan Rescue Ranch located just outside the city. Here, we'll get our first insight into Costa Rica's varied wildlife, learning about rescued species including parrots, macaws, sloths, spider monkeys and toucans. The centre does not permit visitors to handle wildlife, and they concentrate on rescue and rehabilitation as a priority.

On returning to the city, we'll spend some time exploring San Jose, stopping by some of its main architectural highlights and ending at the large Central Market, frequented by locals and tourists alike.

This evening, we take a taxi out to the gastronomic area around the Barrio Escalante, where craft beer pubs and quirky restaurants are a growing trend.

06 OCT Day 5 - Drive to San Gerardo de Dota and the Savegre Cloud Forest (B)

This morning, we'll drive south out of San Jose for around three hours, down to the wild cloud forest of Savegre, famously one of the best places in Costa Rica for sightings of the elusive Resplendent Quetzal. The peaceful region gives us the perfect introduction to Costa Rica's nature. Hikers will enjoy the forest trails and the journey through the alpine-like hills, while nature lovers visit for its biodiversity - the area around San Gerardo de Dota contains around 200 species of bird and countless plant types including various orchid species.

This afternoon, we'll explore the trails around our lodge, perhaps crossing the path of the river, as we delve into the surrounding cloud forest.

It's worth noting that our lodge for the next two nights is at high altitude and can get chilly. We'd recommend packing a couple of warm layers.

07 OCT Day 6 - Early morning search for quetzal, free day to explore the forest (B)

We'll have an early start today, as we set out to explore the trails surrounding our lodge in the search for the quetzal. The males of the species are vivid, with a red breast, green crest and the iconic long green tail that dangles from the branches. Despite the bright colours, they're effective at camouflage and are surprisingly difficult to pick out among the green trees. Binoculars are a useful addition to your kit here, as our tour leader will be diligently attempting to find us one of these famous birds.

After returning to the lodge for breakfast, we'll have the rest of the day free. There are enough walks and trails around the lodge to easily spend a day here. The forest is rich in flora and fauna, and the mountainous cloud forest landscapes are the perfect canvas for keen photographers.

08 OCT Day 7 - Travel to rural Turrialba, free afternoon and evening meal at a traditional finca (farm) (B D)

Today, we'll head to Turrialba, an important agricultural region thanks to its fertile land and the origin of much of Costa Rica's coffee, sugar and Macadamia nuts, not to mention dairy.

The journey will take around three hours. We'll arrive in the afternoon and take some time to explore the small town before dinner. This evening, we'll be visiting a typical 'finca' (farm), for a traditional meal, giving us a chance to try the local cheeses and more.

09 OCT Day 8 - Whitewater rafting through the forest-covered Pacuare River (B L)

OR Coffee Plantation visit and Botanical Gardens

One of Costa Rica's most scenic rivers, the Pacuare is great for both rafting aficionados and enthusiastic newcomers. Calm stretches between the class III-IV rapids give you time to appreciate the passage through rainforest-topped canyons and tumbling waterfalls. Macaws and blue morpho butterflies wheel past as we raft through the steep, green walls of the canyon.

If you're not a confident swimmer, or the thought of rafting isn't for you, we will organise an alternative trip to CATIE and its huge botanical garden, or a visit to the community-led AQUIARES coffee plantation, where you'll learn about the coffee-making process as well as some of the culture and traditions of the area. The Tour Leader will ask your group on the first day or two of the tour to confirm whether you want to raft or not so that they can make the reservations.

10 OCT Day 9 - Journey by bus and boat to Tortuguero National Park (B L D)

This morning, we'll take a two-and-a-half-hour drive to Costa Rica's luscious Caribbean coast, driving through extensive banana plantations. From either Cano Blanco or Pavona, a boat will take us to our spectacular lodge in the Tortuguero National Park, where we'll spend the next two nights. Its complex canal system and narrow lagoons link small, isolated settlements and are rich in fish, including rainbow bass and grouper. They also support an abundance of birds, such as herons, storks and kingfishers as well as 60 species of mammal with howler and spider monkeys in the treetops.

Upon arrival at our lodge, we'll take a short walking tour of the car-less village of Tortuguero.

11 OCT Day 10 - Full day to explore the park searching for wildlife (B L D)

Today we'll begin to explore the Tortuguero National Park. To kick off our day, there's the optional activity of a bird-watching trip by boat at dawn, where we'll have the opportunity to spot some of Costa Rica's spectacular birdlife. Water birds such as herons, egrets and kingfishers are among the birds that may be spotted, although other species of birds such as toucans may be found in the area.

Later this morning, we'll go on a nature walk to understand more about the area's unique ecosystem. Then, this afternoon, we'll take to the waterways for further exploration. On our travels, we may come across the howler monkey, aptly named by the way it noisily protects its territory. Much shyer animals in this area include ocelots, tapir and the incredibly elusive jaguar. Please note some departures may do the waterways tour in the morning and the nature walk in the afternoon. Your tour leader will confirm.

Throughout the year, you might be lucky enough to see different species of turtle nesting close to our lodge. The best time to see this spectacle is between June and September when over five thousand green turtles come ashore to nest on Tortuguero's beaches. At this time of year, there's the option of an evening turtle walk in the company of experienced guides.

12 OCT Day 11 - Drive to Sarapiquí; Visit La Tirimbina for a chocolate tour and night walk in the forest (B L)

Leaving our lodge this morning, we'll travel by boat back to either Cano Blanco or Pavona, before heading on to Puerto Viejo Sarapiquí. The journey will take approximately four hours.

After lunch, we'll visit La Tirimbina for a chocolate tour. During the two-and-a-half-hour tour, we'll learn the secrets and wonders of one of mankind's favourite foods: chocolate. Originally from Central America, the cacao plant has an extraordinary history; it was one of the most important products for the Mayan and Aztec cultures. The discovery of America led to the introduction of chocolate in Europe, transforming it into the product we all know today.

We'll start by taking a short hike through a forest to a former cacao-growing plot, learning about the cacao tree along the way. Upon arrival at the plot, we'll see a demonstration of the artisanal process chocolate-making process.

There'll be plenty of opportunities to taste different kinds of chocolate, prepared on the spot in the traditional way. This evening, we'll take a night walk in the Selva Verde Rainforest, in search of nocturnal species such as snakes and tarantulas.

13 OCT Day 12 - Walk in the Selva Verde Rainforest Reserve, drive to Arenal (B)

Our lodge has many onsite trails in the secondary rainforest, leading right into the Selva Verde Reserve. This morning, we'll take a short walk on some of the trails, through a tropical paradise of towering almendro trees and keel-billed toucans.

Later on, we'll drive just over an hour to Arenal, skirting around the great central volcanic massif, passing through fertile farmlands that are rich with tropical crops. Arenal is a classic conical volcano which was famous for its nightly eruptions until it went quiet in 2010. We'll be exploring the national park on foot, taking a walk on the flanks of the volcano, which are covered by a tangled mass of vegetation on one side and starkly barren on the other. Our tour leader will point out interesting flora and fauna and provide more information about the science and history of the volcano, before taking us to a viewpoint for a closer look.

The town was renamed after an eruption in 1968 that decimated the towns around the volcano's western flanks. Translated as 'fortune', La Fortuna refers to the town's luck in being located on the volcano's eastern side, and so, fortunately, escaping destruction.

14 OCT Day 13 - Free day around La Fortuna, optional hanging bridges and zip wire excursions (B)

Today is free for you to explore the Arenal area as you choose. There are local treks to waterfalls and along lava trails, if you'd like to head out into the surrounding nature. For wildlife lovers there's the option to join a wildlife spotting tour, seeking the famous sloth, the poisonous blue jeans dart frog and the multi-coloured toucan among other species. There are also hanging bridges and zip-wire adventures, which allow you to discover the rainforest at canopy height, either by flying through it or taking a walk across suspension bridges, with a birds-eye view.

Your tour leader will be able to provide information on all the options.

15 OCT Day 14 - Drive south to Manuel Antonio National Park (B)

Leaving the volcano behind us this morning, we'll depart early to descend to the Pacific Coast, enjoying staggering views over the Gulf and Peninsula of Nicoya. Heading south, we'll pause at Carara Biological Reserve, famed for the scarlet macaws and abundant birdlife which populate this transitional forest. Finally, we'll continue along the Pacific Coast to Manuel Antonio National Park, where we'll spend the next three nights. It's worth noting that while Manuel Antonio is a haven for nature lovers, it has grown in popularity in recent years and so is often busier than you might expect. Our journey time today will be between five and six hours.

16 OCT Day 15 - Explore Manuel Antonio's wildlife and beaches(B)

This morning, we'll explore the Manuel Antonio National Park, famous for its beautiful beaches and rich wildlife. During our time in the park, we're likely to see white-faced capuchin monkeys, coatimundi (part of the raccoon family) and tiny squirrel monkeys. This is also one of the best places in Costa Rica to see sloths. The sloth's diet is mainly made up of buds and leaves. As leaves provide little energy, sloths move only when necessary and even then, very slowly so they're quite easy to spot!

The remainder of the day can be spent relaxing on the white sandy beaches, enjoying a swim in the warm, azure waters. The sunsets from this coast are spectacular and must be seen to be believed.

17 OCT Day 16 - Free day in Manuel Antonio, relax on the beach or revisit the park(B)

Today is free to relax in Manuel Antonio. You could choose to revisit the park or relax on the beaches around the town. If beach time isn't for you, there are also lots of other activities on offer, including boat trips, horseback riding or surf lessons.

18 OCT Day 17 - Travel back to San Jose International Airport where the trip ends(B)

We'll leave Manuel Antonio this morning and drive 160 kilometres, approximately four hours, back to San Jose's Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO), where we'll arrive at around 11:00 am and find a lunch spot and enjoy a break and a walk before we are due at the airport again.

5:00 pm Fly onward to Lima this evening, arrive 9:40 pm. Late transfer to hotel and overnight. 4* Hotel in Miaflores.

19 OCT Day 18 – City Highlights Day Tour of Lima (B)

Explore the districts of Miraflores, Barranco, and San Isidro. Visit the historical centre and Catacombs with English speaking guide over a slow-paced informative overview of the Peruvian Capital.

20 OCT Day 19 –Morning Tour choice. (B)

The morning, we will have a choice of a 4 hour walking city tour with food tasting, a 3 hour Peruvian cooking class or a 4 hour Larco Museum Tour - Treasures of Ancient Peru (ceramics, textiles and metallurgy belonging to the pre-Hispanic era).

Our flight departs Lima 5:00 pm to head for Auckland via a short stop in Santiago.

Miss a day

22 OCT Day 21

6:00 am Arrive Auckland. Onward travel if required.

Terms & Conditions: COSTA RICA WILDLIFE ADVENTURE

CHILE / COSTA RICA / PERU: Departs Auckland Thursday 02 October 2025

TOUR PRICE: **\$15,380 per person**

TOUR COSTS INCLUDE

***LATAM Flights:** Auckland – Santiago – San Jose – Lima – Santiago - Auckland

1 LA 800 **02OCT** Auckland – Santiago depart 2010 hrs arrive 1520 hrs

2 LA 650 **04OCT** Santiago – Lima depart 0845 hrs arrive 1040 hrs

3 LA2408 **04OCT** Lima – San Jose depart 1240 hrs arrive 1535 hrs

4 LA2409 **18OCT** San Jose – Lim depart 1700 hrs arrive 2140 hrs

5 LA 521 **20OCT** Lima – Santiago depart 1715 hrs arrive 2255 hrs

6 LA 801 **21OCT** Santiago – Auckland depart 0140 hrs arrive 0615 hrs **22OCT**

Note: we are not holding flight allocations. Tickets will be issued once a group of 5 is formed.

***Explore Guide:** Qualified Adventure Guide IN Costa Rica. Experienced, knowledgeable and service oriented.

***Gratuities** for Costa Rica Driver/Guide included (*a substantial part of their income)

***All Vehicle Transportation:** Luxury Touring Van, Motorboat plus any necessary airport shuttles facilitating travels.

***All Tour Accommodations:** Comfortable hotels, and lodges as detailed in your final tour itinerary.

***All Entry Fees/Permits:** To all National Parks, State Parks, featured attractions and activities specific to the tour.

***Gratuities** for additional included / Guided activities.

***Meals:** 18 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners.

NOT INCLUDED

***Activity** – Extra experiences and some adrenalin activity is booked and paid locally. See activity section at bottom.

***Meals** not indicated (mostly lunch & evenings)

***Insurance** – mandatory

***Domestic flights** from provincial ports can be added from all Provincial towns and Cities: Please ask for a quote.

***Premium or Business Class** upgrades are allowed. Please ask for a quote.

FOOD & DRINK

Please note that as of August 1, 2024, Costa Rica has implemented a comprehensive plastic ban on a wide range of items, including plastic bags, disposable plates, cups, forks, knives, spoons, straws, food containers, and more. We recommend bringing a reusable water bottle as well, a small lunch box and any other reusable items you think you may need. **Can you drink the water?** The water quality is poor and therefore it is recommended to avoid drinking tap water during your trip.

ROOMING, NUMBERS & PACKING

Rooms have been costed for either Double or Twin-share. For single travellers we are happy to find roommates (same gender). Or if you prefer you may opt to have a Single room on your own and pay a single supplement of **NZ \$1740 in Costa Rica and \$380 for the stopovers**. If we are unable to find a suitable roommate, the single supplement will apply. The Vans used can seat up to 16. We will look to keep the maximum number to 14. The Minimum we need to run the tour is 6. One main luggage bag plus a daypack. Casual travelling and walking clothes, lightweight walking shoes and a good quality raincoat are the core ingredients! A packing guide will be sent in the months leading up to departure.

VACCINATIONS

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - include mosquito repellent plus long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary.

AGE AND CAPABILITIES

This tour will appeal to and suit mature travellers. You should be a reasonably active person. The majority of our clients fall into the 60's to late 70's age range and enjoy our unhurried style of small-group travel. We don't focus on age, but if joining we want you to participate and enjoy everything on offer. The tour is based around the viewing and finding of Costa Rica's rich wildlife and dense rain forests, so a keenness for this type of environment is a must. We are happy to help in any way, and to make your tour with us as enjoyable and as memorable as possible.

Booking :

How To Book

Complete our **ONLINE BOOKING FORM**, and then email a copy of the front page of your passport and advise payment of a NZ\$800 non-refundable deposit per person.

*This ensures we can fulfil payment of deposits to the airline and ground operator to secure seats and hotel rooms ahead of time.

Email: - andrea@wildsidetravel.nz

Bank Transfer - ANZ 06-0507-0871753-01

Account Name: **Wanderlust Travel Experts Ltd**

Please use **WILDSIDE /1035** as your Reference

Credit Card – add 1.6% fee. Phone this through to us.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of your tour cost is due 8 weeks before tour departure, **01 August 2025**. Payment can be made via Bank Transfer or Credit Card (1.6% card fee)

CANCELLATION TERMS

Should **Wildside Travel** cancel the trip due to advice from our Ground Operator and cannot provide the tour or sudden Boarder restrictions, and other reasons beyond our control, you are due a refund of deposit and all refundable services paid less an admin fee of \$80 per person. Or monies can be deferred to a 2026 tour. If **you** wish to cancel, your deposit remains non-refundable. If you have paid in full a refund will be calculated according to Airline and Accommodation refund policies. We recommend you take out insurance cover early, so you are covered for non-refundable money paid at any time. If you leave the trip to come home early, there is no refund for unused portions.

CHANGES TO FLIGHTS

If you need or wish to alter your booking in some way or upgrade to a higher cabin, change fees will apply. Please make any amendment requests prior to tickets being issued and prior to full payment to avoid this.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Comprehensive Travel & Medical Insurance is essential for tours to South America. We would recommend you purchase insurance at the same time you make any payments so we can be completely confident of your cover. We can provide a quote for you; we use Kiwi Holiday Insurance– so please discuss your cover needs with us.

If organizing your own, you will be required to provide us with details of your Travel Insurance and any medical conditions we should know about before we leave on tour. We will get this from you after full payment.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

All participants must be in possession of a valid passport (valid for a minimum of 6 months) and all visas, permits required for your passport type. It is ultimately your responsibility to have the necessary documentation to travel. New Zealand passport holders are visa free for 180 Days in Costa Rica, 90 days in Chile and Peru. There is an online arrival forms to be completed for Chile and Costa Rica. We will send those links closer to depart time. If you have another type of passport, please let us know.

We provide all our tour documentation and tickets via our **TRAVEL APP**. And will ask you to download this onto your smart phone. If you do not have a G4 or G5 smartphone, do let me know so we can make other arrangements.

EXCLUSIONS

We do reserve the right to amend the itinerary of any day due to weather, road and vehicle problems, or other civil circumstances beyond our control. We will also endeavour to take all reasonable steps to look after you and your personal property, but we will not be held liable for any accident, personal injury, illness and any consequential loss, damage or loss of property or delays. Wildside is not liable for defaults in the performance of other operators whose services we may employ.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Bird/wildlife watching tour US\$32; Spa Treatment (subject to lodge policies) US\$43-72

Turrialba- CATIE Botanical Garden entrance with guide & lunch US\$60

Arenal- Hot Springs Entrance and dinner US\$77;

Sky Adventure Sky Tram & Zipline with transportation US\$134;

Sky Adventure Sky Tram Zipline & Suspension bridge walk with transportation US\$163;

Waterfall Walk Entrance US\$20;

Sloth Tour Entrance with transport US\$78;

Safari Float - Peñas Blancas River US\$71

Manuel Antonio- Isla Damas Boat Trip (Transport Included) US\$90;

Catamaran & Sunset Tour (Transport Included) US\$101;

White Water Rafting Grade III - Savegre River (Transport Included) US\$119;

Surf Lessons (Transport Included) US\$90;

Horseback riding + lunch (Transport Included) US\$97;

Whale watching (Min 4 passengers) Only runs Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays from July 15th to October 15th US\$170

Please note all optional activities in Costa Rica can be paid for by card (with exception of CAITE), or USD Cash only. Some optional activities might need at least two people to run. Just check with your tour leader on the ground for the details

Please be aware that Class II-III white water rapids are available to all adults on rivers throughout Costa Rica. However, for Class IV rapids and above, some rivers may have lower and upper age restrictions. For specific information, please consult with our tour leader.

We do look forward to you joining us on a tour designed to be spectacular every single day with our signature 'less ordinary' experiences!

