

## Gentle Walking & Wildlife Costa Rica

From the Caribbean to the Pacific via cloudforest, rainforest, rivers and volcanoes, this coast-to-coast journey explores a remarkable land of pristine scenery and exotic wildlife.



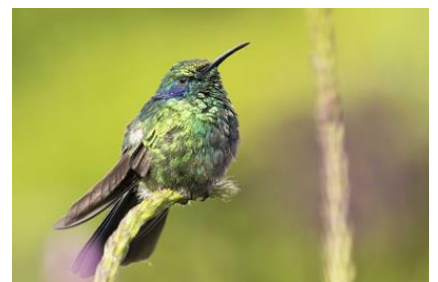
### Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

### Holiday overview

Style	Walking
Accommodation	Hotels
Grade	Gentle
Duration	14 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 6 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Costa Rica
Land only	Joining in San Jose, Costa Rica
Max altitude	1,650m/5,413ft, Monteverde, Day 7

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



Watch related videos online: [Gentle Walking & Wildlife Costa Rica](#)

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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2022 Dates:

Tue 08 Mar - Mon 21 Mar

Tue 22 Nov - Mon 05 Dec

### 2023 Dates:

Thu 09 Mar - Wed 22 Mar

Thu 23 Nov - Wed 06 Dec

## Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

## Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

## No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

## Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

## Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

## Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

# Your guide

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Your walking holiday in Costa Rica will be led by a highly experienced and knowledgeable, English-speaking Costa Rican guide who will help you interpret the geography, geology, flora and fauna that you encounter on your journey across the country.

For some tours you will also be accompanied by a local, expert wildlife guide or ornithologist to enhance your experience.

## Your trip highlights

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- Visit six of Costa Rica's premier national parks and wildlife reserves.
- Enjoy a varied programme of walks that showcase Costa Rica's incredibly diverse landscapes.
- Spend time in Tortuguero renowned for its fabulous wildlife and laid-back Caribbean vibe.
- Look for rare and exotic birds in the cloudforest of Monteverde and take a boat tour along the wildlife-rich waters of Caño Negro Reserve.
- Go hiking amidst the surreal and beautiful volcanic scenery of Rincon de la Vieja in the fiery northwest.
- Relax at the end of your holiday on beautiful Hermosa Beach with the option to extend.

## At a glance itinerary

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Days 1-2	Fly to San José. Road and boat transfer to Tortuguero. Walking tour of Tortuguero town.
Day 3	Early morning Tortuguero National Park boat tour. Hotel trails walk.
Days 4-5	Transfer to La Fortuna. Walk in 1968 Park. Visit La Fortuna Falls with optional swim.
Day 6	Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge boat tour.
Day 7	Transfer to Monteverde. Walk in Santa Elena Cloudforest Reserve.
Day 8	Birdwatching walk in Curi-Cancho Reserve.
Day 9	Transfer to Rincón de la Vieja with Rio Celeste hike en route at Volcán Tenorio Park.
Day 10	La Cangreja Waterfall walk at Rincón de la Vieja National Park. Visit hot springs.
Day 11	Walk the Las Pailas trail at Rincon. Drive to Hermosa Beach on the Pacific Ocean. Time at leisure.
Days 12-14	Transfer back to San José. Fly to London.

## Trip summary

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For such a small country Costa Rica packs a mighty powerful punch. Mountains, volcanoes, cloudforest, rainforest, dry savannah, mangroves and coast are just some of the immensely varied natural habitats that support around 5% of all the species on earth; and all this in an area only twice the size of Wales! This astonishing biodiversity is protected by numerous national parks and reserves and an impressively enlightened approach to conservation and sustainability, making Costa Rica one of the world's premier eco-tourism destinations.

On this two week adventure we introduce you to Costa Rica's great natural diversity as we take you across the country, stopping at national parks and wildlife reserves where you will encounter wonderful birds and animals. You stay in good quality hotels that have been carefully selected for their location and facilities and you will be accompanied by a highly experienced leader throughout. In selected places you will also benefit from the additional services of local bird and wildlife experts.

Your holiday begins on the wilder and more remote Caribbean coast at Tortuguero where you explore by boat along the waterways and canals that reveal an incredible abundance of birds and animals such as sloth, toucan, macaws, caimen and monkeys. Next you travel to La Fortuna, gateway to Arenal Volcano, with walks and waterfalls to enjoy in the shadow of its striking conical peak. You will also head north for a day to Caño Negro Reserve where you take a gentle boat ride along the Rio Frio River, also renowned for its tremendous variety of birds, mammals and reptiles.

Leaving La Fortuna, you climb to the pristine cloudforest of Monteverde to walk in the cool environs of the Santa Elena Cloudforest Reserve and take a specialist birdwatching tour in Curi-Cancho Reserve. Here you may be lucky enough to see Resplendent quetzals, Three-wattled bellbirds and many of the other rare and exotic birds that reside in this lush, unspoiled environment. Next you drive northwest to walk amidst the stunning, other-worldly landscapes of the volcanic Guanacaste region. Azure blue waterfalls, bubbling mud pots, steaming fumaroles and boiling rivers provide the surreal backdrop to your hikes here and a complete contrast to what you have already experienced.

Finally, you make the short trip west and complete your coast-to-coast journey on the Pacific Ocean where you can kick back, relax and soak up the sun on a beautiful, golden beach. Pura Vida indeed!

## Special notes

### Driving times and walking times

Please note that all driving and transfer times given in this itinerary are only approximate. Road journeys can often be longer than anticipated in Costa Rica due to slow moving traffic and poor quality roads in places.

As with driving times, walking times are purely an estimate. Even though trail distances are relatively short, the hot temperatures, combined with frequent stops to drink water, observe wildlife and discuss points of interest will mean that times can vary considerably. Your guide will maintain a gentle pace and you can take your time to enjoy your surroundings and feel comfortable on the trail.

### Shared tours

For some of the days in this itinerary your group may join with others as part of a larger guided tour, such as in Tortuguero, Caño Negro and Curi-Cancha. Your Mountain Kingdoms local leader will accompany you throughout.



# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Fly London to San Jose

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Today you will fly from London to Juan Santamaria Airport in San Jose. On arrival you will be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel in central San José. The journey time can be anything between 45 minutes and 1½ hours depending on the traffic.

At the hotel, you will enjoy a welcome drink and your guide will provide an initial briefing on the arrangements for your next couple of days in Tortuguero.

**Overnight: Casa Conde Hotel or Similar, San Jose**

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## Day 2: Transfer to Tortuguero by road and water, 255km - 5-6 hours. Tortugero town tour in the afternoon. Walk back to lodge - 15 minutes.

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It's an early start for your journey to Tortuguero on the Caribbean coast which, although long, is full of interest. Your expert guide from Mawamba Lodge will greet you onboard your coach and they will stay with you during your time in Tortuguero, alongside your Mountain Kingdoms local leader. Please note that other people staying at the lodge may join you here.

Leaving San José behind, the scenery quickly changes as you drive through the lush surrounding hills, cross the Continental Divide, and descend through beautiful Braulio Carillo National Park. After about two hours you will stop near Guapilés at Rio Danta Restaurant for a typical Costa Rican breakfast, before continuing for a further 2-2½ hours to the pier at La Pavona. On this section of the journey you will pass numerous banana plantations and your guide will provide an insight into the banana industry in Costa Rica. At the pier, you will board your boat for an exhilarating ride that will take you to the delightful Mawamba Lodge whetting your appetite for the adventure ahead. Lunch will be waiting for you after you've settled into your room.



The lodge is situated a mile or so north of Tortuguero Town on a thin strip of land between the palm-fringed waters of the Caribbean Ocean and the broad Tortuguero Canal. You will certainly feel like you're in the tropics. Palm trees, bougainvillea and bird of paradise flowers give the quintessential feel of a tropical garden, whilst wandering iguanas, noisy frogs and chattering birds are your first introduction to the wonderfully exotic wildlife of the area.

In the afternoon, your guide will take you into Tortuguero Town - a quiet, slightly ramshackle place with wooden houses and a typical Caribbean vibe. Here you will learn about the fascinating history of the town and the way of life of the inhabitants, a small community of around 1,500 people. There are several cafes and souvenir shops you may like to browse before returning on foot to your lodge along the dark-sand beach.

Whilst staying at Mawamba lodge you will have the opportunity to participate in several optional activities. By choosing these once you have arrived you have maximum flexibility to select activities that meet your own interests. Options include night walks through the rainforest, extra boat tours or kayaking in the gentle waterways of Tortuguero. These are all payable locally and you will be given full information by your guide.

**Overnight: Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 3: Tortuguero National Park boat tour - 2 hours. Guided trail walk through the hotel's grounds.

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The focus on this first part of your holiday is very much on wildlife rather than walking. Tortuguero National Park is home to an astonishing array of flora and fauna with more than 350 species of bird including toucan and the endangered Green parrot, three out of the four species of monkeys to be found in Costa Rica, plus caimans, crocodiles, sloth and much, much more.

An early morning open-topped boat tour will give you the best chance of seeing the wildlife at its most active and both your expert guide and eagle-eyed boat captain will help you spot and identify birds and animals, often camouflaged to the untrained eye, in the dense canopy and watery channels.

You will probably be aware that Tortuguero is most famous as a breeding ground for green turtles but you need to be here during the wet season (and at night) for turtle sightings.

After your boat tour you will return to the lodge for breakfast followed by some free time to enjoy the pool or relax in a hammock. In the afternoon your guide will walk with your group around the hotel's gardens where you will most likely discover tiny tree frogs, iguanas, colourful birds and lots of beautiful flowers and trees.

**Overnight: Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 4: Transfer by road and water to Guapilés - 3-4 hours. Lunch stop. Drive to La Fortuna - 2 hours.**

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If you have signed up for an optional boat or kayaking tour this morning, you will do this before breakfast after which you will check out and make the return journey by boat and vehicle to Guapilés. A buffet lunch will be waiting for you at Rio Danta Restaurant and you will then continue your journey west to La Fortuna through a green and fertile landscape rich with pineapple, yuca and other crops.

As you get closer to La Fortuna (and if the weather is clear) you will see the unmistakable conical shape of Arenal Volcano rising up on the horizon in front of you. At 1,633m/5,358ft high, and only 6km outside of the town, Arenal dominates the scenery for miles around. Although still considered active there have been no eruptions since 2010 and its slopes are now covered in a thick green blanket of foliage. The gateway to Arenal, La Fortuna has developed as one of Costa Rica's most popular tourist towns with a multitude of adventurous activities on offer as well as hot springs, waterfalls and good walking trails. You will go straight to your hotel when you get to the town and have some time to rest and recuperate after your journey and before you head out for dinner.

**Overnight: Hotel El Silencio de Campo or Similar, La Fortuna (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 5: Walk in Arenal 1968 Park, 4½km - 3-4 hours. Visit La Fortuna Waterfall with optional swim.**

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After breakfast it is only a short 20 minute drive to reach the entrance to Arenal 1968 Park. This privately owned park at the foot of the volcano is named after the year Arenal erupted, and there is much evidence underfoot of the original lava flows. Although there hasn't been any volcanic activity since 2010 the volcano is still considered active, consequently you are not permitted to walk any closer to Arenal than the trails here. There are two trails in the park: the Forest Trail and the Lava Flow 1968 Trail and your walk will combine both taking you through good paths in secondary forest to the base of the volcano.



After a briefing from your guide you begin by walking up to a viewing point where there are superb vistas of Arenal to be enjoyed, assuming the clouds aren't too low of course. You continue next to an area which has been planted with examples of Costa Rica's most important crops: pineapple, banana, sugar cane and coffee. Here your guide will tell you how these different crops are grown and harvested and the importance they play in the country's economy. You can even try pressing some sugar cane on a traditional hand press. Continuing on through the welcome shade of the tree-lined path, you walk to a pretty lake and follow around its banks before ascending on a rockier trail. As you gradually ascend you will really begin to feel the heat of the day and your guide will provide ample opportunities for water breaks. You will also, no doubt, have lots of questions about the flora and fauna that you encounter as you walk. Eventually you reach another good overview at the high point of your walk, where you can rest awhile and take in the views. Here, the large quantities of black, volcanic rock clearly indicate that you are standing on a former lava flow. Finally you head down the trail for a further 45 minutes to return to the park entrance.

In the afternoon you can enjoy a refreshing dip in the enticing, cool waters at the base of the La Fortuna Waterfall, so make sure you have your swimsuit and a towel with you. Situated just outside the town, this picturesque waterfall plunges 75m from its rocky heights into a large pool of crystalline water. To reach the pool you have to climb down some 400 steps after which you'll be ready for a swim, although it is of course good manners to let your guide go first! There is also a second natural pool at the base of the steps that you can bathe in. If you'd prefer not to swim, you can just sit and relax on the surrounding rocks. Fully invigorated you return to your hotel.

**Overnight: Hotel El Silencio de Campo or Similar, La Fortuna (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 6: Drive to Los Chiles - 2 hours. Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge boat tour - 2-2½ hours. Lunch and return to La Fortuna.**

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Today's boat tour is an absolute must for wildlife lovers as you head north to the Caño Negro Wildlife Reserve on the border with Nicaragua. A two hour drive past seemingly endless fields of pineapple, sugar cane, oranges and teak trees, takes you to a dock near the small town of Los Chiles where you board your boat along with other tour participants. Your boat ride is along the Rio Frio River which feeds into Lake Nicaragua on the other side of the border. Water levels can vary considerably throughout the year with a 3 metre differential between the wet and dry seasons.

The Caño Negro Reserve is particularly renowned for its incredible variety of birds but is also home to sloth, caiman, lizards and monkeys who reside in the surrounding lush rainforest and wetlands. As you meander slowly along the river your specialist guide will introduce you to the wildlife, vegetation and ecology of this tropical paradise. You will see anhinga and comorants diving for fish alongside a variety of egrets, kingfishers and herons. Caiman may lurk beneath the banks whilst Basilisk lizards, turtles and iguanas sun themselves on the protruding logs. Above you may hear the unmistakable call of howler monkeys and see a troop of spider monkeys or white-throated capuchins playing noisily in the canopy or swinging from branch to branch. If you're very lucky you may even see a sloth curled up in a tree beside the water's edge. Every time there is something of interest your boat will slow or stop so that everyone gets a chance to see and take photos whilst the guide provides a fascinating commentary.

Returning to the dock you drive to a nearby dining area where you will enjoy a traditional Costa Rican 'Costado' for lunch. You then make the return drive to La Fortuna arriving mid to late afternoon giving you time to relax and maybe head for the pool at your hotel.

**Overnight: Hotel El Silencio de Campo or Similar, La Fortuna (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 7: Drive to Monteverde - 3-4 hours. Afternoon walk in Santa Elena Cloudforest Reserve - 3 hours.**

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This morning you leave La Fortuna and drive past scenic Arenal Lake as you make your way high into the Cloudforest region of Monteverde. It's quite a long drive, the final stage of which is on bumpy, unpaved road so be prepared for your first Costa Rican massage!

As you reach Monteverde you will notice a welcome drop in temperature, a rise in humidity and a distinct change in vegetation as you are now in one of the most pristine and extensive cloudforests in Central America. It is an almost mystical landscape of ancient trees, bromeliads, ferns and mosses often shrouded in mist and home to a staggering abundance of flora and fauna, much of it unique to this higher altitude, moisture-rich ecosystem. Over 400 species of birds live in the cloudforest along with more than 100 species of mammal, and 1,200 different types of amphibians and reptiles.



This afternoon you will visit one of the jewels of the region, the Santa Elena Cloudforest Reserve - a private reserve dedicated to protecting the cloudforest environment. The reserve reaches an elevation of 1,650m/5,413ft and has several kilometres of interlocking trails, the longest being the Caño Negro trail at 4½ km. The dirt paths are well established and undulate through the plants and trees with some small amount of ascent and descent. Your guide will decide which route to follow as you go in search of exotic birds, unusual mammals and intriguing insects. Be aware that even in the dry season, you can experience rain showers in Monteverde so make sure you carry your waterproof jacket or poncho with you.

**Overnight: Cloudforest Lodge or Similar, Monteverde (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 8: Birdwatching walk in Curi-Cancha Reserve - 3-4 hours. Afternoon at leisure.**

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Your day will begin very early to maximise your bird-spotting opportunities but you will probably be woken at first light anyhow by Monteverde's incredible dawn chorus; a raucous symphony of piercing bird calls and melodic song punctuated by the echoing bark of howler monkeys; nature's very own alarm clock!

Not long after daybreak you will be taken to Curi-Cancha Reserve located in the Arenal-Tempisque conservation area in the heart of Monteverde, just 15 minutes from your hotel. Covering an area of 83 hectares (205 acres)

and spanning an elevation of almost 200m (from 1,450m to 1,615m) it bisects both montane and cloud forest protecting a mixed landscape of 50% virgin forest, 45% secondary growth and 5% open pasture. This diversity of habitat houses an impressive number of bird species and makes it a true birdwatcher's paradise. The sought after Resplendent quetzal, Three-wattled bellbird, Blue-crowned motmot, Orange-bellied Trogon and many others are frequently seen here together with toucans and numerous hummingbirds. Indeed, over 250 species of birds have been observed making their home in Curi-Cancha. Your walk today will be led by an expert local ornithologist giving you the very best chance of spotting a good variety of these rare and beautiful birds.

When you enter the park the first thing you are likely to do is simply stand and listen as your guide begins to teach you how to identify the different bird calls you are hearing. Soon, you will be able to distinguish between the frog-like call of the toucan, the distinctive tones of the Three-wattled bell bird, the melodic song of the Clay-coloured thrush and the weirdly alien call of the Montezuma oropendola. The chase will then be on as you follow the trails through the reserve, seeking out the birds you can hear above - often close but remaining frustratingly hidden in the high canopy and dense foliage. At times the trails pass open areas of grassland with several good viewpoints and you will also come across clearings where you can just sit and watch as brilliant hummingbirds and butterflies flit through the surrounding flowering bushes, and small, brightly coloured birds dart in and out of the trees. Here you may also encounter agoutis, squirrels and coatis, the most commonly seen mammals in the area.

After three to four hours in Curi-Cancha your bird tour will end and you will head into the small town of Santa Elena to enjoy an early lunch in one of the many cafes that line the streets. It's also a good opportunity for some souvenir shopping or to stock up on any essentials. The rest of the day is yours at leisure.

**Overnight: Cloudforest Lodge or Similar, Monteverde (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 9: Drive to Tenorio Volcano National Park - 3-3½ hours. Walk the Rio Celeste Trail, 6km - 2½-3 hours. Drive to Rinco de la Vieja - 2 hours.**

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Today you leave the cloudforest behind and drive to Rincon de la Vieja situated in the Guanacaste region in the far northwest of the country. For this stage of your adventure the focus switches away from wildlife and more towards landscapes as you explore the surreal scenery of this hot, dry and fiery region of Costa Rica.

The first part of your drive today is a scenic treat as you follow a ridgeline with panoramic views to both the west and east - as far as the Pacific Ocean on a clear day. You then join Costa Rica's main arterial highway before turning east for a final 45 minutes (on and off unpaved road) to arrive at the entrance to Parque Nacional Volcán Tenorio. Like Arenal volcano, Tenorio is considered an active volcano although without the eruptive displays previously experienced by its more southerly cousin. The area surrounding Tenorio was designated a National Park in 1995 and its major attraction is the dazzling blue water of the Rio Celeste River which flows through the park.



From the park entrance you follow the well-maintained Rio Celeste trail initially through lush rainforest where birds, insects and butterflies are plentiful and you may also see, or at least hear, monkeys in the trees above. The first main point of interest you reach is a picture-perfect waterfall where the waters tumble into a pool of brilliant, aqua-blue water. The amazing colour is the result of a natural chemical reaction occurring further upstream where two rivers join together creating a mixture of sulphur, copper sulphate and calcium carbonate.

You next come to an overview with great views of the peaks of Tenorio and neighbouring Montezuma Volcano. Continuing along the banks of the alluring river, where at times you will see the waters bubbling due to geo-thermal activity, the trail eventually ends at a gloriously coloured azure blue pool, a lovely spot to sit and enjoy a drink and snack. Rested, you retrace your steps back along the trail to the park entrance. Although not particularly long at just 6km, the undulating trail and high temperatures mean that it will take up to 3 hours to complete the walk. You can then enjoy a late lunch before continuing by road for another 2 hours to reach your accommodation at Rincon de la Vieja.

**Overnight: Hacienda Gauchelpin or Similar, Rincon de la Vieja (Meals: BLD)**



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**Day 10: La Cangreja Waterfall walk, Rincon de la Vieja National Park, 10km - 4-5 hours. Hot springs visit.**

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Your hotel is located just a few kilometres away from the entrance to Rincon de la Vieja Park so it will take only 15 minutes to get there. When you reach the park entrance keep an eye out for Blue-crowned motmots and toucans which are often spotted in the surrounding trees.

Rugged Rincon de la Vieja National Park is dominated by its namesake volcano and the park encompasses savannah, dry forest and rainforest giving a splendid variety of landscapes and habitats for the many birds and animals that reside here. Today's walk is a good opportunity to observe many of the smaller creatures of the forest including the fascinating insect world of multi-hued beetles and leaf-cutter ants as well as various lizards, iguana and perhaps even snakes.



Your trail begins a short walk from the entrance at around 800m in elevation and the path quickly enters lush forest above a stream which you can hear below. You cross a solid bridge, your first of three along the trail, before walking fairly steeply uphill, carefully picking your way through gnarly tree roots, rocks and stones. The path then descends and rises through atmospheric groves of towering strangler figs, immense Guanacaste trees and spiny cedars interspersed with many different types of palms and other foliage. After an hour or so you reach a split in the path and continue, mainly downhill now, through a grove of massive agave plants before emerging into a startlingly different landscape. Suddenly the canopy lowers and you walk out into the more open ground of tropical dry forest, flanked by brown, barren hills. Soon you will gain expansive views reaching out to the Pacific Ocean.

The final section of the trail to the falls is quite tricky to negotiate in places as the path goes steeply downhill over big, uneven rocks, roots and then boulders. You will hear the roar of the water ahead of you before scrambling down to reach La Cangreja (the Crab) Waterfall. Spilling 40m in a ribbon of water out of the forest above, the water forms a clear blue pool at its base with dissolved copper minerals from the volcano giving the water its 'celestial' blue colour. This is particularly noticeable when the sun hits the surface.

Once you've had ample time to enjoy the scene and some refreshments you will begin the hike back along the same path. Later there will be an opportunity for a soothing dip in the nearby natural hot springs. The rest of the day yours to relax and enjoy the facilities at your hotel.

Please note that as this walk is quite long, with an ascent/descent of approximately 200 metres, you may prefer to opt out and spend the day at your hotel instead. Your guide will discuss options and arrangements with you beforehand.

**Overnight: Hacienda Gauchelpin or Similar, Rincon de la Vieja (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 11: Walk the Las Pailas Trail in Rincon de la Vieja National Park, 6km - 2 hours. Transfer to Hermosa Beach - 1 hour.**

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After breakfast you return to the park entrance but this time to follow the Las Pailas Trail. Rincon de la Vieja National Park is a hotbed of geo-thermal activity - Costa Rica's answer to Yellowstone in the States - and on this walk you will see (and smell!) a range of unusual volcanic features.

Las Pailas translates as 'the cauldrons', and this walk through the area on a man-made path, takes you close to many geo-thermal features. Steam and sulphur pour out of yellow and rust coloured earth from natural fumaroles; clay and coffee-coloured pools boil, like cauldrons, with hot volcanic water and smooth grey volcanic mud bubbles and explodes in large pits. It takes about two hours in total to complete the circular trail after which you will return to your hotel to pack and check out.

From Rincon de la Vieja you drive to Hermosa Beach (Playa Hermosa) on the Pacific Ocean. The rest of the day is yours for sunbathing, swimming and idle relaxation.

**Overnight: Villa Del Sueno, Hermosa Beach (Meals: B)**

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**Day 12: Time at leisure. Late afternoon transfer to San Jose - 4 hours.**

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You can enjoy most of the day at leisure before leaving in the afternoon for the journey back to San José. The drive will take around four hours although traffic congestion around San José can make this somewhat longer.

**Overnight: Casa Conde Hotel or Similar, San Jose (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 13: Transfer to Juan Santamaria Airport. Depart Costa Rica.**

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The day is free to relax at your hotel before transferring to the airport in good time for your overnight flight back to London.

**Overnight: Departure day (Meals: B)**

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**Day 14: Arrive UK.**

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## Our grading system

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Gentle Walking & Wildlife Costa Rica is graded as a Gentle walking holiday as described below.

### Gentle

Trips within this grade typically mix sightseeing with easy-paced half and/or full day walks. On these trips, walks will be on relatively low altitude trails, for a duration of around 4-6 hours. On all of our Gentle graded trips, some ascent and descent should be anticipated, and there may occasionally be a longer walking day. Holidays within this grade generally use hotels and comfortable lodges although a few do have some nights camping.

These holidays are suitable for people who enjoy easy-paced walks in the British countryside or exploring on foot rather than in a vehicle.

## What the price includes

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**Mountain Kingdoms** aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

### What's included:

- ✓ An experienced English-speaking tour leader plus local expert guides where stated.
- ✓ 12 nights in good standard hotel accommodation
- ✓ All excursions and entry fees as described in the itinerary
- ✓ 12 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 4 dinners
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicle
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK (flight inclusive option)
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)The chance to attend one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

### Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

### What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Tips
- ✗ Optional sightseeing/activities
- ✗ Locally paid bar bills and laundry
- ✗ Evening meals on 7 days

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

## Your accommodation

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We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



### **Casa Conde Hotel or Similar, San Jose**

Situated in a residential neighbourhood close to the centre of San Jose, the Casa Conde is a good 3\* hotel offering comfortable two-room suites with fridges and coffee making facilities. The hotel has a pool and terrace as well as a restaurant serving international and local dishes. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout.



### **Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero**

This delightful lodge is located on a thin strip of land between the Caribbean Ocean and Tortuguero's main canal and can only be reached by boat. The rustic wooden rooms are dotted throughout the lodge's attractive landscaped gardens and offer large beds, a ceiling fan and en suite bathroom facilities. The lodge has a pool and restaurant serving buffet meals. A boat tour and Tortuguero town walk are included in your stay at Mawamba Lodge whilst guests can purchase additional tours on site including kayaking and rainforest night walks. Please note that additional tours must be booked and paid for in cash at the lodge.



### **Hotel El Silencio de Campo or Similar, La Fortuna**

Located 5km outside of the centre of La Fortuna, El Silencio del Campo offers a quiet retreat with excellent facilities including its own natural hot spring pools. A generous breakfast is served in the restaurant and the hotel also has a spa centre and a standard swimming pool. Large, cabin style rooms are well-appointed and come complete with coffee machine, TV, mini bar and free Wi-Fi. Each room has its own small patio with seating to make the most of the dramatic views of Arenal Volcano.



### **Cloudforest Lodge or Similar, Monteverde**

The Cloudforest Lodge is set high in the canopy of Monteverde's cloudforest and offers a tranquil setting as well as a range of activities and facilities. Wood-lined, cabin style rooms are simple but have coffee machines and free Wi-Fi, and the hotel has a good restaurant that overlooks the forest and attracts hummingbirds to the feeders on its terrace. The lodge has walking trails through its extensive grounds as well as its own zipline tour (bookable and payable locally).



### **Hacienda Gauchelpin or Similar, Rincon de la Vieja**

This popular hotel with spacious rooms is also a working ranch and has a number of facilities on-site and in the locale. It has a large restaurant, a bar and a swimming pool with terrace. It also offers free access to its own hot springs about 2km away. The Hacienda has an interesting nature trail as well as a spa and tour centre.

The Rinconcito Lodge is our alternative accommodation in the area. A smaller but similar standard of hotel, it is located a little further from the entrance to Rincon de la Vieja National Park.



### **Villa Del Sueno, Hermosa Beach**

Just a few steps from the quiet waters of Hermosa Beach and with two pools and delightful gardens, the Villa del Sueno is a great place to relax at the end of your holiday. The hotel has an excellent a la carte restaurant, although other restaurants and bars can be found just a short walk away. Standard rooms come complete with a private balcony, fridge and coffee maker, and upgrades are possible (subject to availability).



## Meal arrangements

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12 x breakfasts, 10 x lunches and 4 x dinners

## Flight arrangements

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### Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

### Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

## Further information

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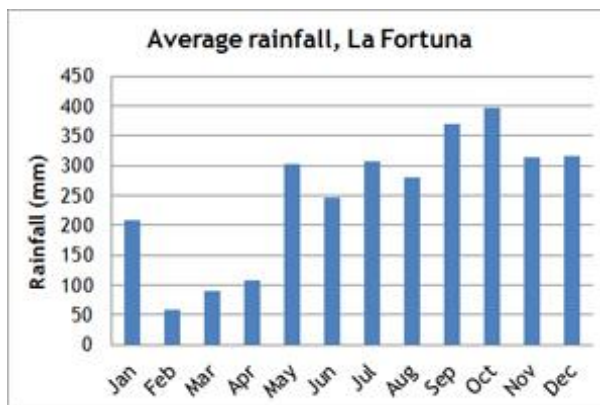
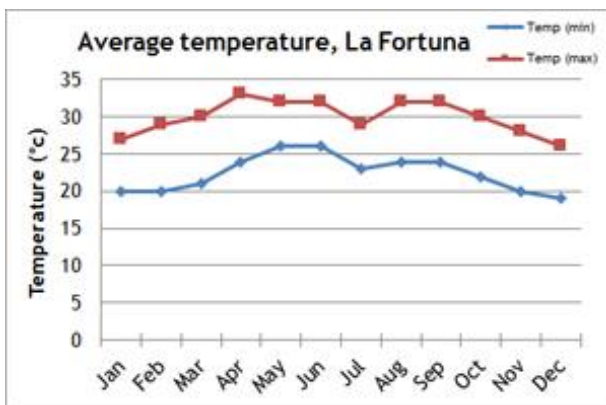
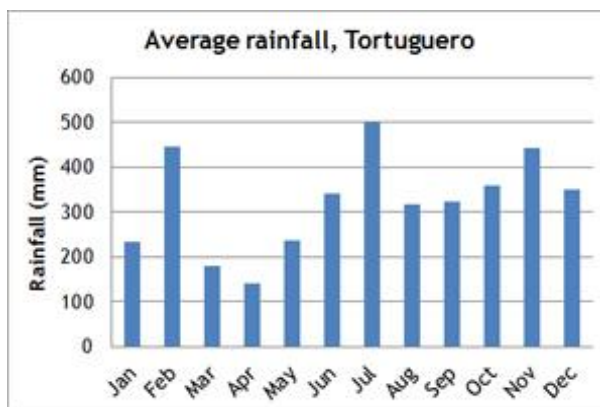
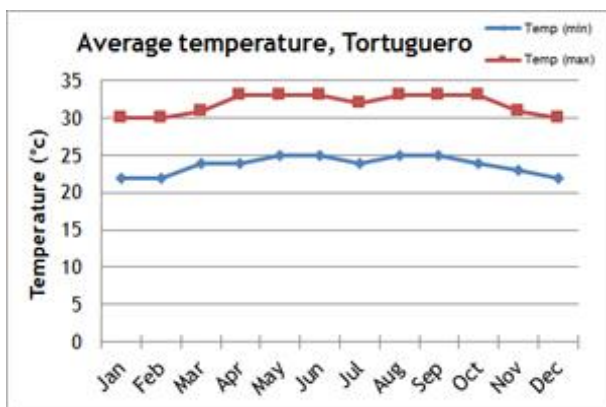
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

# Climate information



## Extensions

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### Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).



We offer the opportunity to extend your stay at beautiful Hermosa Beach at the end of your holiday with the option to upgrade your room (subject to availability).

We can also organise an extension to the stunning Luna Lodge Eco Resort in remote Corcovado National Park on the Osa Peninsula.

## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- This holiday is unique to Mountain Kingdoms and has been carefully designed to maximise your opportunities for encountering Costa Rica's birds and wildlife.
- You will be accompanied by a highly experienced Costa Rican leader throughout your holiday in addition to expert wildlife guides who will lead tours in specific parks to enhance your wildlife viewing experience.
- We use good quality hotels in prime locations many of which have swimming pools and other first-rate facilities.
- We include a programme of well-paced walks that give an excellent introduction to the varied landscapes of this small but incredibly diverse country.
- Alongside the great walking and wildlife viewing our well-balanced itinerary includes time for a dip in hot springs, to swim beneath a waterfall, to browse the local shops or just to relax and enjoy your surroundings.
- Whenever possible, we have timed our departures to coincide with the direct British Airways flights from Gatwick to San Jose. These popular flights fill quickly (and are subject to change), so don't delay making a Flight Inclusive booking with us. We can also take a provisional booking (no deposit required) and hold flights for a short time until you are ready to make a confirmed booking.
- We research our new holidays ourselves and team member, Kirsty Parsons, travelled to Costa Rica in May 2018. If you have any questions about this trip please contact Kirsty on 01453 844400, she will be very happy to help.
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects often associated with larger groups.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and activities.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.



## What our clients say

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*For a Central American country, Costa Rica defies preconceptions: it's politically stable, peaceful, well developed and has very high standards of hotels and service. But of course it's the fantastic wildlife that steals the show. We saw so many wonderful birds and animals and yet we seem to have barely scratched the surface. Still, it's always good to have a reason to return.*

*- Mr P, South Gloucestershire*



*Long on my travel wish list, Costa Rica didn't disappoint. From seeing a smiling sloth on my first day to walking through the weird and wonderful landscape of Rincon de la Vieja on my last, it was a trip of constant surprises and delights.*

*Kirsty Parsons, Mountain Kingdoms*

# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **Truly independent**

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

## **Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality**

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

## **Complete financial security**

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

## **No Surcharge Guarantee**

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

## **Award winning Responsible Tourism**

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).

## **Genuine small group travel**

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

## **Loyalty Discount**

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

## **Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier**

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

## **Comprehensive information**

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit [www.tourismdeclares.com](http://www.tourismdeclares.com)

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

### **Carbon Offsetting**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

### **Reducing Carbon Emissions**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.



