



## Costa Rica 'on a Shoestring'

the volcanoes are active, but you don't have to be!

Tourcode: **SCR**

Groepsgrootte: **2-24**

Aantal dagen: **16**

### Reisbeschrijving

#### Along the Caribbean coast

The next day you'll have a magnificent ride through **primeval rain-forest** and mountain passes as we travel along the Caribbean coast to Punta Cocles. The more adventurous members of the party can go **wild-water rafting** on the Pacuare if they wish.

#### Cahuita National Park

We'll stay in a **pleasant resort** where we'll be awakened in the morning by howler monkeys. Nevertheless, it's a wonderful place to relax and enjoy a swim from the beach. You might wish to take a walk amongst the flora and fauna that thrive around the resort. Or you could visit the Cahuita National Park, a little further from the resort. Swimmers might take a **snorkelling or diving trip** by boat so that they can enjoy the magnificent corals and large numbers of multi-coloured fish. Nightlife fans will want to go out in Puerto Viejo, with its many reggae-bars and restaurants. Day 5 we move on to Sarapiquí to observe many of their 400 or so bird species.

#### The most active volcano in Central America

On day 6 we drive to **La Fortuna Arenal**, the most active volcano in Central America. There's a lot to do here: horse-riding, rafting, hiking to a hidden waterfall, or paying a visit to the **Caño Negro** (a water-rich area full of birds, alligators, turtles, moneys and reptiles). One must-see is the '**Jesus Christ Lizard**' or common basilisk, which can walk on water.

#### Rincón de la Vieja

On day 8 we'll drive north to the national park at Rincón de la Vieja. The several volcanoes there are ideal for long or short walks. **Clouds of fog and sulphur** will billow around us as we walk beside the boiling and whirling mud-pools, stopping here and there for a mineral clay bath. Here you'll also be able to ride horses and participate in a '**canopy tour**' during which you'll be lifted in a harness and 'flown' amongst the tree-tops.

#### Monteverde Cloud Forest

On day 10 we drive towards the Monteverde Cloud Forest. Situated at the highest point of the central mountain ridge, it's nearly always covered in fog. This has caused the trees and tree brackens to be overgrown. Here you'll find extraordinary fauna such as humming birds, coatis, **poison arrow frogs** and the shy and beautiful red-and-green-coloured quetzal. Adventurers can have a sky-walk here amongst the hanging bridges high over the jungle.

#### Playa Tamarindo

Day 12 sees us at Playa Tamarindo, the sunniest part of the country. Its magnificent



beach offers superb swimming and, during October to March, giant green sea turtles and leatherback sea turtles may come ashore to lay their eggs. **You can snorkel, dive, surf** or visit the nearby bird-rich Tamarindo Wildlife Refuge. Alternatively you might hang out at the bars and restaurants. Our comfortable hotel has its own small swimming pool and you'll sleep here, in small bungalows, just opposite the road to the beach.

## San José

On day 14 we'll return to San José, and a chance to eat ourselves under the table, for one last night before we disband.

## Routekaart



## Uitgebreide reisbeschrijving

### Welkom

#### Welcome to Shoestring!

Shoestring is looking forward to welcoming you on one of our unforgettable journeys. Be well prepared, get informed about your destination and make sure you know which vaccinations or other medication you require. During the trip, be flexible and don't feel obliged to always stay with the group. Your guide will advise and assist you, but remember that he or she will have a lot on their mind to ensure that everything is running smoothly. We hope you have a fantastic time in this beautiful destination.

### Before you travel



If your trip is unexpectedly cancelled, we will let you know at least three weeks prior to departure. Cancellations are very rare though, so go ahead and prepare yourself for your trip.

## Moeilijkheidsgraad Informatie

### This tour is classified as Category A

The difficulty of our travels varies greatly. Added to this is the fact that travel difficulty is a very personal perception. To give an impression of the difficulty of a particular holiday we have developed a classification system.

**Category A:** Light travel, possible for anyone. Short distances, good hotels, slow travelling speed.

**Category B:** Feasible for anyone who prepares for the trip. Sometimes longer distances, good hotels or camping facilities, some adventure nights, average travelling speed.

**Category C:** Feasible for anyone who prepares well and is flexible, but some parts of the journey are difficult, distances may be long or require a day's walk, there may be some basic facilities.

**Category D:** Reasonably difficult trip because of long travel distances, often primitive facilities or tents, long walks.

**Category E:** Difficult trip. The traveller knows him/herself and is well prepared, he or she realises that the holiday can be demanding.

The Costa Rica trip falls under **category A**. Any healthy person can make this trip; the travel distances are average and most hotels comfortable. We overnight in middle class hotels, but take into account that you travel in a developing country, which means a much lower standard of living, than you are used to at home. A flexible and positive attitude is much more important than physical fitness.

## Nature of the trip

This tropical country accommodating an enormous diversity of animal and plant life is also called the garden of Central America. Although large parts of the country are covered by jungle, there are smoking volcanoes and stunning palm beaches to be explored. This trip is a real must for nature-lovers.

## Wat is inclusief

Accommodation in hotels; transportation with AC (mini) bus only for transfers from hotel to hotel; English speaking tour leader (until arrival Playa Tamarindo).

## Wat is exclusief

International flights, all meals; tips; visas; optional excursions; all entrance fees; airport transfers; booking fee; travel insurance.

## Let op

♦ You will generally travel with other UK clients. However, if less than 6 people book the tour on the UK website then your group may be combined with a Dutch, German, Italian or Spanish group. Your tour would still be conducted in English.

## Dag-tot-dag schema

	Vervoer	Route	Overnachting
1.		San José	San José



2.		San José	
3.		San José - Punta Cocles	Punta Cocles
4.			
5.		Punta Cocles – Sarapiquí	Sarapiquí
6.		Sarapiquí- La Fortuna	La Fortuna
7.		La Fortuna	
8.		La Fortuna - Rincón de la Vieja	Rincón de la Vieja
9.		Rincón de la Vieja	
10.		Rincón de la Vieja - Monteverde Cloud Forest	Monteverde Cloud Forest
11.		Monteverde Cloud Forest	
12.		Monteverde Cloud Forest - Playa Tamarindo	Playa Tamarindo
13.		Playa Tamarindo	
14.		Playa Tamarindo - San José	San José
15.		San José: tour ends at noon	End of tour

## Dag-tot-dag schema

### **Dag 1 - 2: San José**

The party meets up in San José. The city is situated in a beautiful green valley, encircled by volcanoes. You stay overnight in an attractive classic hotel just a few hundred meters from the central plaza. On day 2 you will have a free day in San José. The small and cosy capital city offers shopping streets and markets. Those who are interested, may embark upon a city tour, led by our guide. Visit the Gold Museum or National Museum, or treat yourself to coffee in one of the coffee houses, a favourite pastime of the friendly locals. Book a day tour to the nearby Poas or Irazu volcanoes; its summits are usually hidden above the clouds.

### **Dag 3 - 4: San José - Punta Cocles**

In our own bus we drive along a beautiful route through primary rainforest and beautiful mountains to Costa Rica's quieter, but splendid Caribbean coast. You may go wild water rafting on the Pacuare or Reventazon, and rejoin the group at the end of the day. At the Caribbean coast of Punta Cocles you overnight in a nice resort hotel that has a swimming pool in the jungle, great for relaxing and swimming. Take a walk and enjoy the rich flora and fauna area surrounding the resort. Howling monkeys will wake you early in the morning. Visit the Cahuita National Park. If you are lucky, you will spot monkeys, sloths and toucans. Moreover, you will discover a beautiful white sandy bay. In the protected rainforests of the Talamanca region you can embark upon all sorts of different excursions, such as visiting the waterfalls by horse or hiking through the jungle. Visit the pleasant town of Puerto Viejo, which boasts a selection of fine bars featuring reggae music, and restaurants. Visit the Gandocca Manzanillo park with local guides or join a kayak tour. Embark upon a snorkelling or diving trip by boat and enjoy the beautiful coral, home to large quantities of brightly coloured fish.

### **Dag 5: Punta Cocles – Sarapiquí**

We now move North west to Sarapiquí, one of the richest areas for bird watching: Sun bittern, oropendola, motmot, at least four species of trogons, umbrella birds, frigatebirds,



jacamars, tinamous, stripe-breasted and black throated wrens are some of more than 400 species that have been recorded in the area (50% of the species of Costa Rica). You can join a safari river tour, guided walks, raft on the white-waters, or horse-ride.

## **Dag 6 - 7: Sarapiquí- La Fortuna**

Today we drive alongside one of the world's most active volcanoes, the Arenal. We overnight in a lovely hotel with a tropical garden, viewing the Arenal. When the evening falls, the sky is clear and with a little bit of luck, you will watch the impressive spectacle of red glowing lava descending from the 1633 meter high summit.

You will stay two nights here. In the surroundings of La Fortuna you could go rafting and horse riding. In the evening we visit the hot water springs around the Arenal volcano. Of course we offer the opportunity, on day 7, to embark upon an (optional) excursion to the magnificent Caño Negro reserve, an area full of water housing a great variety of birds, caimans, turtles, monkeys and reptiles. A special feature here is the Jesus Christ lizard that is able to run across the top of the water.

## **Dag 8 - 9: La Fortuna - Rincón de la Vieja**

We take our bus to the northern province of Guanacaste to arrive by the end of the afternoon in Rincón de la Vieja. You will stay two nights in a lodge or hacienda. In the surrounding jungle there are beautiful waterfalls to be explored. You can get to them on foot or by horse. The Rincón de la Vieja National Park is a must for the adventurer or nature-lover. The park accommodates different volcanoes and the nature reserve is great for either short or long hikes. Between rising patches of fog and steaming sulphur you'll walk along boiling, swirling mud pools. The tropical rainforest is packed with exotic bird and animal species. You can take wonderful (optional) hikes through the nature reserve. Hike or ride a horse along waterfalls and through the jungle seeing more sulphur springs and bubbling mud pools. One extraordinary activity is where you swing among the treetops from one platform to another, just like Tarzan! Real adventurers may climb the crater of the Rincón volcano, with a local guide.

## **Dag 10 - 11: Rincón de la Vieja - Monteverde Cloud Forest**

The trip continues to one of the world's most famous nature reserves, the Monteverde Cloud Forest. The trip alone to 'the green mountain' is an adventure that rewards you with the most breathtaking views. You stay two nights in a lodge with a good restaurant and large garden. The entrance to the reserve is close by, so is the Butterfly garden and a beautiful Hummingbird gallery. Walking in the reserve is a great pleasure but there are more possibilities: the frog garden, horse riding or crossing suspension bridges, which, harnessed high up in the cloud forest let you experience the forest in a truly unique way. Just a hike through the cloud forest is an enchanting experience that you will never forget. An extraordinary feature is the dramatic diversity of microclimates all a very short distance from each other. A day tour almost always provides fog, sun and rain and an average temperature of 18 degrees C. One thing that makes the cloud forest unique is the variety of shades of green. Due to the high humidity the giant trees are abundantly covered with bromelias, orchids, ferns, elkhorns and mosses. This is also the home of the magnificent red green feathered, shy quetzal bird.

## **Dag 12 - 13: Monteverde Cloud Forest - Playa Tamarindo**



On day 12 we arrive in Playa Tamarindo, in the country's sunniest region, on the coast of the North Pacific. Again this beach has a beautiful bay, wonderful for swimming. During the season (October through March) giant Green Sea and Leatherback turtles come ashore to lay their eggs. You can go snorkelling, diving, (wind) surfing or visit the nearby Tamarindo Wildlife Refuge to see its many bird species. The village has nice bars and restaurants, allowing you to have a break. The cosy hotel has its own swimming pool. The beach is on the side of the road.

## **Dag 14: Playa Tamarindo - San José**

On day 14 you will leave by bus for a magnificent drive to San José where you will spend one more night.

## **Dag 15: San José: tour ends at noon**

It is the last day of your tour but rather than being about 'Goodbye' your thought should be 'Go further'!

Visit your personal 'my.shoestring' page on our website. 'my.shoestring' is the perfect way to make contact with other travellers before and after your trip. You can read and create journals from trips and upload your photos onto the photo gallery. Visit my shoestring today.

When booking your tour, please check to see whether you need any post-tour nights, bearing in mind that accommodation for the night of the final day of the tour (day 15) is not included.

## **Landinformatie Costa Rica**

### **Achtergrondinformatie**

#### **Celebrations and festivals**

Public holidays: Because we will be travelling in a Christian country, so Christmas, Three Kings Day (January 6) and Easter are celebrated across the country.

During the Holy Week (Semana Santa) almost everything will be closed in Costa Rica. The days between Christmas and New Year are considered an unofficial holiday, especially in San José. Then there are the festivals honouring the patron saints. San José's festival (Saint Joseph) is on March 19 and the day of the Virgin de Los Angeles (Costa Rica's patron saint) is on August 2. Día de Juan Santamaria on April 11 commemorates the national hero and Día de la Raza (Columbus Day) on October 12, is a national holiday all over Central America.

#### **Communications**

Sorry, this information is not available at this moment. Please check back later.

#### **Cultural differences and habits**



The cultural differences between Europe and Central America are huge, one could write a very large book on the subject. Below you will find some useful hints that we have picked up along the way to make your stay more pleasant and enable you to get along with the local inhabitants.

**Bargaining:** Bargaining in Costa Rica is only customary when buying souvenirs or objects of art. In markets and shops food is bought at fixed prices.

**Politeness:** Politeness plays an important role in communication all over Central America. **When addressing somebody, in a shop or bus, say hello first. A simple "buenos días" or "buenas tardes",** accompanied by a smile, works miracles. Likewise, a greeting will gain a return greeting, then, the actual interaction begins. Upon entering a communal space, such as a restaurant or waiting room, it is also very polite to say hello to everybody present.

**Clothing:** Make sure you look well dressed and clean. This is an important issue to the people of Central America. Even poor people do their utmost to look well kept. As you seem to have the money to travel all the way from Europe to Central America, you are bound to be a rich person in the locals' eyes. You will gain respect if you dress properly. Of course, this does not imply you have to wear your best Armani outfit when wandering the streets. Best leave jewels and valuables at home. Do not put on revealing clothes, as it is not always appreciated. Shorts are allowed, for men and women, but only on beaches and in some coastal resorts. Bathing clothes are only allowed in swimming pools and on beaches. Many local women wear a T-shirt on top of their bathing suit (in order to avoid male attention). Dress properly when visiting churches, out of respect for the locals and their culture.

**Macho behaviour:** The myth that characterizes men as being strong and women as fragile and dependent has not been dispelled in Central America. Macho attitude and male pride are widely evident. Here men still whistle to attract the attention of a woman. Solo women travellers tend to receive plenty of (unwanted) attention. If you do not like this, it is best to ignore them. Minimise the problem by dressing conservatively. Carrying a wedding ring may help. Avoid dark places and lonely beaches if you travel by yourself. Of course, there are more than sufficient 'normal' men around.

**In general:** Be constantly aware of the fact that you are a guest in a country, which has a different etiquette. They do not behave differently, you do.

## **Food and drinks**

Costa Rican food is quite unpretentious. There are plenty of restaurants, but you might want to visit a small 'soda' (restaurant with local dishes). Preferably visit busy restaurants or eating-houses. They are busy for good reason and therefore guarantee a faster turnover rate of the food prepared. Wash your hands thoroughly before dinner.

**Breakfast (desayuno):** You will most likely be served a solid breakfast including tortillas or bread, eggs (huevos) prepared by choice with bacon or sausages and bean sauce (frijoles). Typically Costa Rican is the so-called 'gallo pinto', a mixture of rice and beans, possibly served with eggs. If this is too much for you, you may opt for toast, jam and sweet rolls. An absolute must is Costa Rican coffee as Costa Rica produces the world's best coffee beans. Furthermore, fresh fruit juices (fresco natural) with milk (leche) or water (agua) are always available.



Lunch (almuerzo), dinner (cena) and snacks: For Costa Ricans lunch is the most important meal of the day. However, this is not the case for visitors being on the road a lot of the time. Meat (carne), fish (pescado) or chicken (pollo) form the main part of the meal and come in larger quantities than Europeans are accustomed to, particularly in the pricier tourist restaurants. Delicious salads usually feature on the menu. Casado is a very complete dish including rice, beans, salad and meat, fish or chicken by choice. Most dishes are not terribly spicy. You'll find bottles containing local variations of Tabasco on your table. In the pricier restaurants in the cities you can treat yourself to excellent fish (especially ceviche, fish marinated in lemon). City restaurants offer pastas, pizzas and Chinese food as well.

Fruit: Availability depends on the season: oranges, bananas and pineapples are most popular, but also more exotic fruits. To name a few: Chirimoy, carambola, granadilla (a passion fruit), guave, guayaba, cas (some sort of pomegranate) and papaya. The jugos naturales or fruit juices made from these fruits is delicious.

Drink: Costa Rican drinking water, especially in the Central Valley, has an acceptable quality. Outside the region hotels often use filtering installations to purify water for drinking. If you don't want to run any risk, you are best to buy bottled water, on sale practically everywhere. Generally, meals are accompanied by beer. However, wine is available almost everywhere. Beer is for sale in all sorts and sizes. Stronger brews include rum, gin and the local guaro (firewater). Fresh fruit juices are available, everywhere.

## Landscape

Costa Rica covers 51,100 sq. km and is about nine times smaller than the UK. It borders both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean. The coastal plains are low, contrasting with the tall volcanic mountain ranges that lie between them. The country's **highest peak, Cerro Chirripó, has an altitude of 3,819 m. Costa Rica has two neighbours: Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south.** A large part of Costa Rica has been declared a protected reserve for good reason. Despite having been colonized by Spain, it was largely left to develop on its own due to its lack of treasures such as gold. For such a relatively small country, it is enormously diverse biologically and includes 200 species of mammals, 350 species of reptiles and amphibians, 850 bird species, 10.000 different plants and some 40.000 types of insect. Costa Rica has rainforests, cloud forests, active volcanoes, savannahs, mangrove forests, high mountains, palm beaches and coral reefs. Costa Rica is relatively sparsely populated and counts just four million inhabitants. Most **economic, cultural and political activities are confined to the capital, San José. The city is in the central highlands, surrounded by ever-present volcanoes. But as soon as you leave San José, you feel as if you are travelling back in time surrounded by peace and nature.** The eastern part of Costa Rica is mainly known for its banana plantations yet also houses the world's most important turtle breeding grounds in the Tortuguero National Park. The west side boasts the most stunning beaches and a chain of idyllic bays.

## Flora and fauna

Costa Rica's flora and fauna is abundant. The region is characterized by large differences in climate. A mountain range, consisting mainly of volcanoes, divides the country in two. The western coastal area has special flora, mainly semi-tropical rainforests due to the rainy season here. These largely unaffected forests are still home for special animal species such as poison-arrow frogs, jaguars and white-faced capuchin monkeys. The mountain chain is completely different, mainly rain and cloud forest. A notable example is



the Monteverde Cloud Forest, home to the magnificent quetzal, a bird honoured by the Maya's. An extraordinary number of hummingbird species are seen here too. The eastern lowland was once a tropical jungle, but has become a plantation area. There are many beautiful spots, where howler monkeys wake you up in the morning. A special feature in this region is the Tortuguero National Park, where between July and October, green turtles come ashore in great numbers (arribadas) to lay their eggs.

## Population

Costa Rica's 4 million inhabitants (71 per sq. km.), called 'Tico's' or 'Tica's', are predominantly (95%) descended from Spaniards and, for the most part, Catholic. During colonization, European illnesses wiped out the larger part of the indigenous population. Less than two percent descend from Jamaican Negro slaves who were put to work on **banana plantations during the 19th century. They live mainly in Limón province along the Caribbean coast.** The original Indian population nowadays represents slightly more than one percent of the total population. Given the small cultural influence left by the Indians and the large European contribution, most visitors prefer Costa Rica for its nature and scenery rather than its culture.

## Religion

The larger part of the population is Roman-Catholic, introduced and enforced by the Spanish colonialists, who used religion as a control mechanism. Now 85% are Roman Catholic, and 15% Protestant.

## Weather and climate

Climate: Costa Rica enjoys a tropical climate and temperatures depend more on differences in height than the time of the year, varying between twenty degrees Celsius in the highlands up to thirty degrees at the coasts. The area bordering the Pacific Ocean and the Central Valley has two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. The dry season (or summer) runs from the end of December through April, and the rainy season (or winter) runs from April through November. During the rainy season everything blossoms beautifully and the scenery is much greener. That is why the Costa Ricans call it the 'green season'. The mornings usually are very sunny, and are followed by cooling afternoon showers.

Best travelling time: You can visit Costa Rica throughout the year. The Caribbean region enjoys a more humid climate and showers occur throughout the year. However, this won't spoil your holiday.

## Praktische informatie

### Arrival information

On your first day in San José, take it easy. Take time to adapt and acclimatize. The change of climate and time difference can be quite challenging. Setting off to explore San José is like a smooth landing, the city being up to date in many aspects. Later on you will come across less developed regions. Let the country sink in, try to pick up some Spanish and have fun in central America.



## Electricity

Electricity is the same as in the United States: 110-125 volt, 60 hertz, with matching (plug) sockets, so you need an adaptor. There are power failures in Costa Rica so it is wise to bring along a pocket lamp.

## Health

Travellers to Central America who pay some attention to hygiene and skincare usually don't run into health problems. However, we would like you to pay attention to the following health advice.

**Sunshine and heat:** Sunburn is a frequent cause for health problems. Sunburn and sun/heat strokes are easier caught than you may think. You should therefore avoid the sun during the hottest hours of the day, always wear a hat and good sunglasses when you are walking, and use a good suntan lotion when sunbathing. The latter can best be brought along from home, where the choice of product is much larger and prices are lower. At high temperatures the body's need for water increases very rapidly, as does its need for salt. Make sure you drink enough when the heat is extreme and you will simply have to take it very easy during the hottest hours of the day. Make it a habit to treat wounds, however small, with something like iodine. Infections can occur and spread rapidly in the tropics, so take as much care as possible with scratches and insect bites.

**Diarrhoea:** Next to sunburn, the most common health problem is diarrhoea. Travellers are often hit by it after they have been on holiday for only a few days. In most cases, it is an utterly innocuous phenomenon caused by the change of diet, the heat or harmless bacteria, against which the body will soon develop its defences. The main risk is dehydration, especially in children. It occurs when the body loses more fluid, salt and sugars than it receives. The result is a feeling of listlessness and weakness. It can be prevented by drinking a solution of water and ORS. It is sold in bags at the pharmacies and contains all the minerals and sugars that are evacuated with diarrhoea. Instead of this solution you can also take noncarbonated soft drinks or heavily salted broth. For many people, cola has a constipating effect in the first stages of diarrhoea. When the diarrhoea is accompanied by high fever, bloody defecation or strong qualms, it is sensible to consult a physician. When the diarrhoea lasts for more than a few days without the above-mentioned symptoms or when you have to travel, you may take Imodium or Diacure a couple of times. It is an opium-like preparation that stops the bowels completely for a number of hours.

**Insect bites:** Mosquitoes are hard to avoid in Central-America. However, the following advice may help reduce the likelihood of being bitten. Malaria-carrying mosquitoes tend to bite after sunset and before sunrise. In the evening, wear long trousers and a long-sleeved roll neck T-shirt that covers well. DEET or other preventive remedies are effective, but do not expect miracles.

**Prickly heat:** Prickly heat is an inflammation of the pores caused by excessive perspiration. It is common and innocent, but very annoying. The skin grows red and irritated in places. Places where skin touches skin, such as armpits and thighs, are particularly susceptible. The symptoms will decrease when you take a cold shower – without using soap – a few times a day and dry yourself off well. Talcum powder on the affected spots may also help. When it is hot and damp, do not sleep under a sheet but



wear a cotton T-shirt. If it troubles you very much, the best thing to do is take an air-conditioned room for a couple of nights.

**Travellers' health kit:** A health kit for the tropics should contain adhesive bandages, bandages, cotton wool, scissors, thermometer, iodine, painkillers, malaria tablets, O.R.S. - packages (Oral Rehydration Solution), loperamide (against diarrhoea), sunscreen, pair of tweezers, insect-repellents such as DEET and a soothing ointment for persistent itching. If you are on medication, make sure you have a precise description available in English (no brand name, but composition and doses are important). Bring along a double quantity for the duration of travel and keep it separated from the other luggage.

**Medical passport:** If you are on prescription medicine, bring an extra supply and keep it separated. This way you will always have a spare stock. Ask your pharmacy to draw up a medical passport for you. This includes names of the substances and the exact composition of the medication that you use. Keep this document and your medication in your hand luggage. If you have a chronic illness, ask your GP for a written explanation of your disease and its treatment (in English).

**Vaccinations:** Please click on the following link for information regarding vaccinations and malaria requirements. Moreover, your needs depend on whether you have had previous vaccinations, whether you are allergic to certain medicine, if you are pregnant, your age, and so on. ALWAYS contact your GP or some other healthcare authority for advice. The complete vaccination package includes DTP, hepatitis A, and malaria. There are no compulsory vaccinations, except for those who have been to regions with yellow fever or cholera within two weeks before arrival in Costa Rica.

**Some additional recommendations for an enjoyable stay:** Allow your body and mind some time to adapt to the new time zone and location. Avoid stress; do not plan to do too much at once. At least take it easy on the first day. It is a good habit to get up early; in hot climates the morning temperature is often the most agreeable. Besides, the people in the countries you visit are also used to rising early. When you adapt to their rhythm you will make the most of your trip. When you are well rested you are best able to deal with all the new impressions and will have the energy to undertake more activities.

## **Info for people at home**

Ensure that those at home know in which country you are and how long you are planning to stay away. You should fix a date when you will contact them. Making telephone calls from Costa Rica is no problem. You can make collect calls and Internet cafes are everywhere. Provide the people who will pick you up from the airport with your flight times and numbers. Shoestring will not provide flight and/or travel information, hotel names and telephone numbers to third parties. Any information on delays may be retrieved via the airport information number or Teletext.

### **Contact person**

In case of an emergency, it is important for us to have details of someone we can contact on your behalf. You have entered a name on the booking form. It is possible that this person is unavailable or on holiday during your trip. If so, enter a second person so that we are sure to be able to get in touch with somebody.

## **Luggage and clothing**



This tour leads us through tropical lowland as well as high mountainous areas, the latter enjoying a moderate climate, which may include cold nights. Therefore, bring along thin, cotton clothes. For the evening, a closed neck long-sleeved T-shirt or a thin cotton roll neck sweater is recommended to protect against mosquitoes. Also, bring along a jersey or sweater and a rain jacket. Nights in Costa Rica can be quite cold! Do not forget an umbrella as protection against rain and too much sun. Bring along a pair of good-quality, worn-in walking shoes and flip-flops or sandals. You should consider bringing along the following: sunglasses, sunscreen, toiletries, a traveller's health kit, a hat/scarf, a photo/film camera, spare batteries, a pocket knife, a lighter, a small stock of non-perishable snacks and sweets, an alarm clock, writing materials, books, passport, sufficient money, photocopies of your passport and travel insurance, your flight ticket(s), travel insurance-pass including alarm number, important addresses and a good travel guide, toilet paper, towel and a reading lamp. If you bring along electrical equipment, you will need an adaptor. During this trip, you won't need a mosquito net or sleeping bag. We prefer that you pack everything into a weekend bag or backpack, rather than a solid suitcase, which would take up too much space and can be hard to carry in some circumstances. A small backpack or shoulder bag comes in handy for hand luggage. Valuable papers are best kept in a thin cotton money belt, to be carried underneath your clothes. Take care to have an extra, clean set of clothes in your hand luggage, so that you can do without the other luggage for 48 hours, just in case it arrives later than you do. For example, make sure to put any important medication and a toothbrush etc in your hand luggage and that your luggage is not too heavy.

## **Money and currency**

The amount of pocket money we advise, is the minimum you spend on meals, drinks, optional excursions, entrance fees, local airport tax and tips. The amount of money you will finally be spending obviously depends on your personal habits. Therefore, souvenirs are not included. We suggest an amount of £150- £175 per week.

The examples of extra costs to be expected on this journey are only an indication and can vary depending on your requirements.

## **Photography**

Good-quality film rolls can be bought everywhere in the larger cities. Check the best-before date and only buy from stores where the materials are kept in cold storage. The best thing to do, by the way, is to bring enough film from home. Never leave films or cameras in the locked-up coach. The quickly rising temperature will soon affect the quality of the photographic materials. Not all types of camera batteries are on sale. Therefore be sure to take batteries that will last the entire holiday. People do not always like being photographed. When in doubt you had better ask first. Sometimes they will say no, every now and then they will ask for money. At a number of sites you are not allowed to take photographs.

## **Safety**

In the cities sometimes pickpockets are at work. A simple method keeps them away from you: stash your big money and valuables underneath your clothing, in a non-visible manner. Keep some ready money apart, so that you do not have to search for it in the middle of the street. Carry your backpack on your stomach if it contains valuables. Also, carry your camera in front, tied to a solid belt. Take these precautions, especially when



visiting markets. Few robberies occur, but when this happens, it is on desolate places you would normally avoid, such as dark, quiet alleys. Your luggage will be reasonably safe in your hotel rooms, however, do not leave money or valuables lying about. Put them in a locked bag or even better, keep them with you or hand it over to the staff of the hotel lobby to go in the safe.

## Time difference

In Costa Rica it is 6 hours earlier than in the UK (during summertime 7 hours).

## Tipping

Restaurant and hotel employees are not well paid. You may not have a ready solution for the country's poverty, but the least you can do is to tip the ones working for you. The guideline is (provided you are satisfied with the service) about £0.70 tip per room per day for hotel employees. The same amount goes for the bus drivers, hired by Shoestring, per person per day. A tip box is useful in this case, for which the passengers will take turns in administering, in consultation with the travel guide. Moreover, while the group is on the road, snacks can be purchased from this money. You do not need to tip taxi drivers. In general, the fare tourists are charged exceeds by far the amount locals pay. The travel guide also expects a tip by the end of the trip; provided she/he has done her/his job well. Our guideline is £18 per passenger for the entire trip.

The taxes you will encounter are:

Sales tax ( impuestos de ventas ) This is a 13% tax added to sales of goods.

Service tax. This is a 10% tax applicable only to restaurant bills. It corresponds to the tip to the waiter or waitress and is already added to the total. If not, this will be specified on the menu.

Approximate prices for moderate meals, dinner / lunch at hotels and restaurants in Costa Rica are mostly around \$ 10.00 per person. At lodges mostly a little bit higher. Taxes are not included and consist of 23%;

- Service tax. This is a 10% tax applicable only to restaurant bills. It corresponds to the tip to the waiter or waitress.

- Sales tax. This is a 13% tax added to sales or goods.

Restaurant bills will add a 13% sales tax and a 10% service tax; total tax to be added will be 23% to the price listed on the menu.

## Adresgegevens