

Further Information

Costa Rica Coast to Coast



This document has been compiled by our challenge leaders. **Please do take into account your own personal preferences and common sense!** We welcome feedback on how this document can be improved upon your return from your challenge.

A few notes...

Costa Rica is in Central America, bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the east and south, the Pacific Ocean to the west and south and the Caribbean Sea to the east. It is famously home to a rich variety of plants and animals. Around 25% of the country's land area is in protected national parks and protected areas and has successfully managed to diminish deforestation from some of the worst rates in the world from 1973 to 1989, to almost zero by 2005. The Corcovado National Park is internationally renowned among ecologists for its biodiversity (including big cats and tapirs) and where visitors can expect to see an abundance of wildlife.

Historically, Costa Rica has generally enjoyed greater peace and more consistent political stability compared with many of its fellow Latin American nations. Like the rest of Central America, Costa Rica never fought for independence from Spain. In 1821, the authorities in Guatemala declared the independence of all of Central America and that date is still celebrated as Independence Day in Costa Rica.

Since the late 19th century, Costa Rica has experienced two significant periods of violence. In 1917, 19, General Federico Tinoco Granados ruled as a military dictator until he was overthrown and forced into exile. In 1948, José Figueres Ferrer led an armed uprising. With more than 2,000 dead, the resulting 44-day Costa Rican Civil War was the bloodiest event in Costa Rica during the 20th century.

The victorious rebels formed a government junta that abolished the military altogether and formed a new democratic government. Since then, Costa Rica has held 13 presidential elections, the latest in 2010. All of them have been widely regarded by the international community as peaceful and transparent.

Climate & Temperature

Because Costa Rica is located between nine to ten degrees north of the Equator, the climate is tropical year round. Costa Rica's seasons are not defined to the four seasons in the Northern Hemisphere. The year can be split into two periods, the "summer" or dry season goes from December to April, and the "winter" or rainy season goes from May to November. Humidity is higher on the Caribbean side than on the Pacific side.

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Max. Temperature (C)	27	27	28	28	27	27	27	27	26	26	26	26
Min. Temperature (C)	17	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	17	18	18	18
Average Percent Sunshine	40	37	39	33	25	20	21	22	20	22	25	34





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Time

GMT -6 hours

Food

All meals will be provided on the challenge from breakfast on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 10 and will be a mixture of local and western style. On cycling days, lunch will be a packed lunch or picnic style prepared by the guides en route. Costa Rican food is very nutritious with plenty of rice, beans, beef, chicken and fish. All dietary requirements can be catered for so long as we know in advance. We will have 3 good meals a day and there will be snacks available to purchase along the way at local stores if you wish or you may wish to bring your own snacks that you prefer.

Difficulty & Terrain

You will be cycling for up to 8 hours every day for 8 consecutive days covering a total of over 500km. The terrain will be varied, from paved road to gravel tracks and single track dirt paths with river crossings and plenty of hills. The fitter you are, the more you will enjoy this Challenge. Cycling training tips can be found on our website to put you in the right direction and Global Adventure Challenges can offer training days and weekends to help you prepare - please contact us at enquiries@globaladventurechallenges.com.

A typical day...

We rise early and after a hearty breakfast at our accommodation, we leave for the days cycling. We plan to have an early start to arrive at our next campsite well before it gets dark. We will have water stops along the route throughout the day and a stop for lunch.

Briefings will be held the night prior to each days cycling, to ensure all participants are aware of what will be involved in the following days challenge.

Water & Refreshment Stops

Water will be provided throughout the cycling challenge, but if you would like snacks on the ride you will need to purchase these along the route or bring them with you.

Traffic

Traffic drives on the right hand side in Costa Rica. Many Costa Rican roads are in a bad state of repair and short distances can take a very long time. To avoid potholes, drivers will often snake through the left and right lanes, usually returning to the right when oncoming traffic approaches. While this may seem erratic, you can become quickly accustomed to it.

Many roads are unpaved, and even the paved roads have lots of unpaved sections and washed out or unfinished bridges. Bridges are often only wide enough for one vehicle; one direction usually has priority.

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Water

Use bottled water for drinking. Do not drink tap water in Costa Rica unless it has been boiled, filtered, or chemically treated.

Equipment

Apart from some cycling shorts, helmet and cycling gloves you do not need any specialist kit. You can bring your own pedals, saddle and any other personal cycling equipment if you require. You may wish to consider bringing a hydration backpack.

Luggage

You will need a large holdall/suitcase for your main luggage which will be transported by vehicle to and from our accommodation each day. You will also need a small backpack/bum bag to carry any essentials with you during the day i.e. sunscreen, tissues, camera, etc.

Valuables

Leave valuables at home if possible. One main important rule . if you don't need it, don't bring it! Use hotel safes and lock boxes where available for passports, tickets and other valuables when leaving the hotel for the evening.

Health/Vaccinations

It is highly recommended that you consult your doctor to ensure your vaccinations are all up to date.

You must discuss your own particular needs and contra-indications to vaccines or tablets with your doctor or practice nurse.

The vaccinations below are given as a guideline only – always consult your own doctor:

Confirm primary courses and boosters are up to date as recommended for life in Britain.

Courses or boosters usually advised: tetanus; hepatitis A.

Vaccines sometimes advised: typhoid; diphtheria.

There is no risk of Yellow Fever in Costa Rica, however, a Yellow Fever certificate is required if entering from an infected area.

Malaria is common in certain areas of Costa Rica. Please make sure you have up to date anti-malarial advice from your doctor or practice nurse.

Dengue Fever is endemic to Latin America and the Caribbean and can occur throughout the year. There is no vaccine or immunisation to prevent dengue fever and you should take usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites e.g. Long sleeves, mosquito repellent with 50% DEET.



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Medical Support

There will be a comprehensive first aid kit carried with the group at all times. All Global Adventure Challenges leaders are 16 hour outdoor first aid qualified and we are never too far away from hospitals if needed. Medical care in Costa Rica is of a high standard, however only emergency medical treatment is available without charge for visitors.

Support & Crew

There will be a strong support team with a professional Global Adventure Challenges leader from the UK, as well as local guides. A vehicle will follow the group providing support if needed.

Accommodation & Sleeping Arrangements

In San José we will be staying in a hotel with twin rooms and en-suite washing facilities. Whilst on the cycling route we will be camping . 2 cyclists per tent. Our porters and support team will have camp set up ready for our arrival after each day of cycling. Participants need to bring their own sleeping bags and sleeping mats.

Toilet & Washing Facilities

Toilets will be available at our accommodation but it will sometimes be necessary to use the great outdoors. Please ensure you carry your own tissues and happy sack type bags for disposing of them (also useful for dirty socks, rubbish, etc!). Hotels will have en-suite bathroom facilities and washing facilities will be provided at campsites.

Health & Hygiene

Wash hands wherever possible to avoid stomach upsets. If washing facilities aren't available use antibacterial dry wash or wipes. Use high factor sunscreen and re-apply regularly.

Security & Safety

All guides will be in radio/ phone contact with each other. You should always be vigilant when staying in an unfamiliar environment and it is sensible to look after your personal possessions as you would do at home . keep handbags closed and wallets in zipped pockets. Don't leave valuable equipment such as cameras and mobile phones on tables, etc. Don't wear expensive jewellery/watches or carry large amounts of cash.

Passport/Visa

British nationals do not require a visa to enter Costa Rica and can stay as visitors for up to three months. Passports should have a validity of more than six months from the date of entry.

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Currency & Spending Money

Local currency is the colón ₡ (plural colones), named after Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus). Bills come in 500, 1000, 5000 and 10,000 notes, while coins come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 25, 50 and 100. Older coins are larger and silver, while newer ones are smaller and gold-colored. This is often a source of confusion for visitors.

You should bring cash in US dollars to change once you are in Costa Rica but make sure the dollar bills are clean and in good condition or they may be refused. ATMs are available, even in the smallest towns. Throughout Costa Rica, you can pay for larger purchases with US dollars, however, local meals, bus fares and small items should generally be paid with colones. The vast majority of Costa Ricans gets paid in colones, and buy and sell in colones. Carry small bills and coins when visiting villages where change may not be readily available for larger denominations, do not try to buy from street vendors with bills of 5000 colones or over.

We recommend you take between £150-200 spending money and a credit card for emergencies, although how much spending money you will need usually depends on how many presents you wish to bring home!

Average Costs

Costa Rica is the most expensive country in Central America and costs are significantly higher here than in most Central American countries, but cheaper than in the USA or Europe.

Travel Insurance

Every participant must be covered for the activities throughout the itinerary. A comprehensive travel insurance policy is available through Global Adventure Challenges at a cost of approximately £53.70. A travel insurance application form will be sent to you approximately 14-16 weeks before departure. If you are opting to use your own personal travel insurance then details of your policy should be sent to Global Adventure Challenges.

Departure Tax

Departure tax of US\$26 is payable upon leaving the country. It is payable in US dollars or in colones.

Tipping

It is customary to tip the bellhop/porter (US\$1 to US\$2 per service) in hotels. In a nice restaurant, you might leave a small tip to show your appreciation, but it is not required.

Tipping your guide(s) is appropriate, customary and always appreciated. Your guides work in teams and evenly split all gratuities they receive. Your gratuity should reflect the quality of service you received and anything special your guide(s) did to enhance your trip. We recommend around US\$30 from each person, but this does depend on your budget and what you feel is appropriate.

Some useful tips...

"Pura Vida" is the most recognizable phrase attached to Costa Ricans, and it reflects the Costa Rican way of life. Often, people walking down the streets, or buying food at shops say hello by saying "Pura Vida", which means pure life, or good life. A recommended response to "How are you?" would be "Pura Vida".



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Snakes & Bugs

There are a few snakes and spiders that inhabit Costa Rica, however it is unlikely that you will encounter any of them, as with most wild creatures they would rather avoid an encounter with you as much as you would with them! Your local guides will inform you of any precautions that may be necessary.

Telephone Signals

Costa Rica is a mountainous country and there are remote locations where a mobile phone will not be able to pick up a signal, however, nearly all major towns and villages will have full cellular access as well as most popular beach locations. It is estimated that 75 to 80% of the country has coverage.

Extending Your Stay

If you would like to stay in the Costa Rica after the challenge we can arrange an extension for you. Please submit your request for an extension with relevant dates by email enquiries@globaladventurechallenges.com as soon as possible. There is a £60 + VAT charge for having your return airline ticket extended. Please note all extensions are strictly limited, subject to availability, given on a first come first served basis and the final decision always rests with the airline. Your request will be placed on a list in order of receipt and we will contact you approximately four months before the date of travel to confirm whether the extension is possible.

Responsible Tourism

In our overseas destinations we work with small local ground handlers that employ local guides, using as much infrastructure as we can locally, to boost economy and income. We aim to ensure that all local guides involved with our events are given a fair wage in accordance with appropriate local standards and each of our challenges is designed using the knowledge of local people.

We believe that we need to preserve and respect the locations in which our challenges take place in order for future generations to experience the same fantastic times and views as we do. More information regarding our Responsible Tourism policy can be found on our website.

Fact File

- **Full country name:** The Republic of Costa Rica
- **Area Covered:** 51,100 km²
- **Capital City:** San José
- **Population:** 4,608,426
- **Currency:** Costa Rican colón (CRC)
- **Language:** Spanish
- **Religion:** Christianity is predominant
- **Government:** Constitutional democracy
- **Major Industries:** microprocessors, food processing, medical equipment, textiles and clothing, construction materials, fertilizer, plastic products
- **Major Trading Partners:** US, Netherlands, China, UK, Mexico