

TOUR CODE: CR 03
TOUR TITLE: Wildlife & Adventure in Costa Rica

ITINERARY OUTLINE

- DAY 1 DEPARTURE FROM ***** - ARRIVE SAN JOSÉ (1 NIGHT)
- DAY 2 SAN JOSÉ - POÁS VOLCANO - LA PAZ FALLS – PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUÍ (2 NIGHTS)
- DAY 3 LA SELVA, SARAPIQUÍ BOAT TOUR, COCOA PALANTATION TOUR, BAT TOUR
- DAY 4 PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUÍ - PINEAPPLE PLANTATION - CULTURAL CONNECTION - ARENAL/LA FORTUNA (2 NIGHTS)
- DAY 5 SKY TREK & LA FORTUNA FALLS **OR** HORSEBACK RIDING AND CANOEING ON LAKE ARENAL
- DAY 6 ARENAL – ZARCERO - SARCHÍ - GRECIA - SAN JOSÉ (1 NIGHT)
- DAY 7 DEPARTURE FROM SAN JOSÉ



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- POÁS VOLCANO:** Walk to the crater edge
- LA PAZ:** Waterfall Gardens (Butterfly Garden, Trail Hike to the Falls)
- SARAPIQUÍ:** La Selva Biological Station Tour, Sarapiquí River Boat Tour, Chocolate Tour, Bat Tour, Original Pineapple Tour, Costa Rican Cooking Classes **OR** Costa Rican Craft Workshop (**choose one option**)
- ARENAL:** Eco Termales Hot Springs, Aerial Tram and Sky Trek and La Fortuna Falls **OR** Horseback Riding Tour and Canoeing Tour on Lake Arenal (**choose one option**), Arenal Volcano at Night
- ZARCERO:** Menagerie of Sculpted Shrubs
- SARCHÍ:** Artisan town
- GRECIA:** Grecia World of Snakes
- SAN JOSÉ:** Tiquicia Dinner and Show

DAY 1 DEPARTURE FROM ***** - ARRIVE SAN JOSÉ (1 NIGHT)

The group will be met at the SJO airport by the Stecmatours' English speaking private guide. We will board our own private coach and transfer to our hotel in San José or near the SJO airport.

Meals: dinner

DAY 2 SAN JOSÉ - POÁS VOLCANO - LA PAZ FALLS – PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUÍ (2 NIGHTS)

Our day begins with a visit to **Poás Volcano National Park**, an active volcano whose main crater is more than 1 mile wide and constantly active with fumaroles and hot geysers. Poás is surrounded by dense cloud forests, and we will hike some of the nice gentle trails. Poás is an andesitic-basaltic stratovolcano 2,708 m high. It is impressively beautiful and is one of the three volcanoes on the continent that are accessible along a paved road that almost reaches the crater edge. The main crater is an enormous hollow almost 2 km in diameter and 300 m deep. At the bottom of this crater there is a thermomineral lagoon some 350 m across. When it occasionally dries out, the sulphur emissions become more intense and produce acid rain that damages the vegetation and the fields on its sides. To the north of the active crater there is the von Frantzius cone, the oldest eruption point, which is today inactive, on the peak of the massif. To the southwest, there is another cone called Botos, which is currently occupied by a very beautiful cold water lagoon some 400 m across. The volcano experiences plumiforme cyclical eruptions similar to those of a geyser, which consist of columns of muddy water together with steam that rise from a few meters to several kilometers.

This afternoon we will visit **La Paz Waterfall Gardens**, where we will begin in the huge Butterfly Garden that features a variety of species and an excellent learning center. Next we will explore the hummingbird and orchid gardens, before taking a leisurely hike on a series of trails through primary and secondary forest alongside the La Paz River. There are several opportunities to stop and lookout over a series of powerful waterfalls, including the namesake La Paz Fall.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 3 LA SELVA BIOLOGICAL STATION, SARAPIQUÍ BOAT TOUR & CHOCOLATE TOUR

This morning we will visit **La Selva Biological Station**, one of the most important sites for Tropical Ecosystem Research in the world. It is comprised of 3,988 acres of old growth and disturbed tropical wet forest and a pioneer site in education, research, conservation and ecotourism in Costa Rica since 1963. In fact it was one of the first private protected areas in the country and part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Species diversity is spectacular, including more than 1,850 species of vascular plant flora, 350 species of trees, more than half of the 886 species of birds in Costa Rica, five of the six species of felines in the country, more than 70 species of bats, approximately 500 species of ants and thousands of reptiles, amphibians and other insects.

Next we will embark on a **Boat Tour down the Sarapiquí River**, a relaxing opportunity to view crocodiles, caimans, monkeys, sloths, and dozens of bird species.

The **Chocolate tour** includes a guided hike across a suspension bridge to an old cacao plantation, as well as through a forested section where you will observe how the product originally developed there. During the walk, you will be exposed to the natural and cultural history of the cacao tree and, upon reaching the plantation, the guide will reveal the secrets of transforming cacao fruit into chocolate. You'll see the chocolate-making process first-hand and even have the opportunity to treat your taste buds to organic rainforest chocolate! After the tour, you can visit the gift shop to purchase some organic cacao chocolate bars made by the "Asociación de Mujeres Amazilia del Caribe", a group of local women from Pueblo Nuevo de Guácimo, Limón. The aim of the tour is to show the natural process that was used since the beginning of the domestication of this plant that includes harvesting, fermentation, drying, and milling of the seeds, to develop the final product we consume nowadays. Thus, we have the help of two women that portray the whole crafting process while the guide delivers the historical and theoretical facts about it.

This evening we will embark on a guided **Bat Tour**. Bats represent 50% (110 species) of Costa Rica's mammals, and this tour will dispel many myths you may have heard about these wonderful mammals and provide a wonderful education on the world of the bats. We begin our adventure by watching a multimedia presentation on the history of bats, their classification system, diversity, adaptations, reproduction methods, and threats. Next, a trained guide will lead us on a safe tour where we will have an opportunity to touch, feed and release safely captured bats. We will also take a short, guided walk to see the mist nets used to gently catch the bats. They are kept in captivity for less than 2 hours and the professional methods used assure the wellbeing of the animals.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 4 PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUI - PINEAPPLE PLANTATION - CULTURAL CONNECTION – ARENAL/LA FORTUNA (2 NIGHTS)

Our morning begins with the **Pineapple Plantation Tour** led by a specialist guide. The main object of the farm is the cultivation of pineapple in harmony with nature. More than 60 % of our pineapple farm is in its natural state, in tropical forests and jungle with abundant flora y fauna. The farm produces certified organic golden pineapple on a large scale. We have more than 25 hectares of reforested land, with two rivers crossing the property. Combining this with the history and morphology of pineapple; direct contact with an operating pineapple farm; visit to the packing plant; a trip through the plantation in the comfort of a unique trailer and lots of freshly cut pineapple and pineapple juice make this a tour you will remember. We are located in the Virgen de Sarapiquí, 3 km west of the town of Llano Grande. We also have an open air restaurant open every day with local and international dishes.

Next you can **choose** one of these two Cross Cultural Connections.

One option will be to take **Costa Rican Cooking Classes**, where we will learn how to make a traditional meal and then enjoy our creation. This class will offer you the opportunity to learn how to make traditional Costa Rican dishes. The classes are led by a local community member, and everyone participates in the cooking process. You will learn about the history, botanical names, and cultivation of each fresh ingredient. The menu consists of *guacamole* (a dip made with avocados), *batidos* (milkshakes), *empanadas* (turnovers), *tortillas* (flat bread), and *patacones* (fried green plantains). Enjoy trying all of your culinary creations at the end of the class!!

The other option will be to engage in a **Costa Rican Craft Workshop**. This is an educative and creative class where you will learn from a local artisan how to make jewelry with rainforest seeds, woodworking, rainforest painting, and palm frond weaving. Only natural resources are used during the class and you will be able to take your creations back home.

Late this afternoon we transfer to our hotel located in the Arenal area. This evening we will visit the **Eco-Termals Hot Springs** and have the opportunity to submerge ourselves in the natural medicinal waters. The springs include several pools with varying water temperatures in a natural setting.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 5 AERIAL TRAM, SKY TREK & LA FORTUNA FALLS OR HORSEBACK RIDING AND CANOEING ON LAKE ARENAL

This morning we will travel to the Arenal Rainforest Reserve, where our morning begins with an **Aerial Tram Tour**. Telefericos with open carriages will whisk us up the northern slopes of the Cordillera de Tilaran to the lookout point at 4,250 feet. From here you will have an amazing view of Lake Arenal and the volcano. Our day will also include **Sky Trek in the Arenal Reserve**. This exciting adventure combines walking, hanging bridges and the thrills of a canopy tour (zip lines) into one adventure. This afternoon we will hike to the impressive **Rio Fortuna Waterfall** in a lush jungle setting. After viewing the falls from the top, we will take another hike (*weather permitting*) down a steep path to the pool formed by the waterfall.

We can swim in the pool, the calm pool just around the bend, or join the locals at the popular swimming hole under the bridge. This evening we will travel around Arenal Volcano to a viewing spot where, if we are lucky, we will witness Arenal Volcano hiss and spray lava.

OR

This morning we will begin with a **Horseback Riding Tour** around Arenal Volcano. Our tour begins near Los Lirios Lake and we will take a slow, relaxed and scenic ride to the viewing point at Juncos Lake, featuring Arenal Volcano in the background. During our ride we will also view many species of flora and fauna, and if we are lucky, we may see toucans, howler monkeys or sloths. This afternoon we will enjoy a pleasant afternoon of **Canoeing on Lake Arenal**. Our relaxing tour will provide breathtaking views of Arenal Volcano and we will have the opportunity to observe different species of birds including the Flycatcher, Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron and magnificent Aninga. This evening we will travel around Arenal Volcano to a viewing spot where, if we are lucky, we will witness Arenal Volcano hiss and spray lava.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

**DAY 6 ARENAL/LA FORTUNA - ZARCERO - SARCHÍ – GRECIA'S WORLD OF SNAKES –
SAN JOSÉ (1 NIGHT)**

This morning we begin our journey back to the San Jose area. Our first stop will be in the town of Zarcero, where we will visit the small park in the middle of town to view the Menagerie of Sculpted Shrubs, which includes a monkey on a motorcycle, people and animals dancing, an ox pulling a cart, a man wearing a top hat, and a large elephant. Next we make our way to nearby Sarchí, Costa Rica's main artisan town, where we will view the colorfully painted miniature oxcarts made here. Oxcarts such as these were once used to haul coffee beans to market and they remain a well-known symbol of Costa Rica. In addition to miniature oxcarts, many carved wooden souvenirs are made here with rare hardwoods from the nation's forests. Our afternoon concludes with a visit to the **Grecia World of Snakes**. This serpentarium contains more than 150 snakes, representing more than 50 species. It is located in the picturesque little town of Grecia, renown for its unusual metal church, painted a deep red with white gingerbread trim. We continue to our hotel in the San Jose area, before concluding our tour with a **Tiquicia Dinner and Show** that includes a show of native Costa Rican folklore dances and a buffet of local cuisine.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 7 DEPARTURE FROM SAN JOSÉ

Our rewarding tour will come to an end as our private guide accompanies us to the SJO airport for the return flight home.

Meals: Breakfast

PRICE BREAKDOWN
Valid until December 31st 2011
Rates are in US\$ per person in twin or in double room

Paying people	Vehicle	Rate
40-50	Bus 50 or 52 seats	830
36-39	Mid-size bus 40 seats	830
30-35	Mid-size bus 40 seats	845
24-29	Mid-size bus 34 seats	865
20-23	Small bus 26 seats	875
18-19	Coaster 22 seats	875
16-17	Coaster 20 or 22 seats	890
14-15	Coaster 20 or 22 seats	915
12-13	Coaster 20 or 22 seats	945
10-11	Coaster 20 or 22 seats	990

Triple reduction: 40
 Single supplement: 225

Following services are included in the rates above:

- Accommodation in tourist or superior tourist class hotels with private facilities guaranteed in each room
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Admission fees to the tourist attractions **bold and underlined** indicated in the itinerary
- PRIVATE English speaking guide 24/7 throughout the itinerary
- PRIVATE transportation with air conditioning for the arrival transfer SJO airport – hotel
- PRIVATE transportation with air conditioning from the second day to the day before the flight departure
- PRIVATE transportation with air conditioning for the departure transfer hotel - SJO airport
- One envelope per room containing following information kit:
 - ✓ Welcome letter
 - ✓ Detailed day-by-day itinerary
 - ✓ Brochures of the hotels, local operators and ICT (Costa Rican Tourism Board)
 - ✓ Stecmatours contacts phone numbers
 - ✓ Emergency phone numbers
 - ✓ Costa Rica map
 - ✓ Sheet for the evaluation of the booked services

Important notes:

- We have quoted standard room in all hotels
- The private English speaking guide will be lodged at the same group's hotels
- Twin room: one bed per person guaranteed

Thanks!

STECMATOURS

San José – COSTA RICA

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