

TOUR CODE CR-04
TOUR TITLE: La Pura Vida

ITINERARY OUTLINE

- DAY 1 DEPARTURE FROM ***** - ARRIVE SAN JOSÉ (1 NIGHT)
DAY 2 SAN JOSÉ - AERIAL TRAM - HELICONIA ISLAND – PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUÍ (2 NIGHTS)
DAY 3 LA SELVA - PINEAPPLE PLANTATION - CULTURAL CONNECTION - BAT TOUR
DAY 4 PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUI – CANOEING ON ARENAL LAKE – HOT SPRINGS - ARENAL/LA FORTUNA (1 NIGHT)
DAY 5 ARENAL/LA FORTUNA – EL TRAPICHE SUGAR CANE TOUR – FROG POND - MONTEVERDE (2 NIGHTS)
DAY 6 MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST RESERVE - BUTTERFLY GARDEN - SERPENTARIUM
DAY 7 MONTEVERDE - COROBICÍ RIVER TOUR - LAS PUMAS CAT ZOO - HACIENDA LODGE GUACHIPELÍN (2 NIGHTS)
DAY 8 DAY OF ADVENTURE AT HACIENDA GUACHIPELÍN
DAY 9 DEPARTURE FROM LIBERIA



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 - AERIAL TRAM - HELICONIA ISLAND – PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUÍ (2 NIGHTS)

This morning we will leave San José to enjoy an **Aerial Tram Tour** through one of Costa Rica's most unique eco-tourism and research facilities. The tram takes us on a 90-minute, one-mile-long excursion through the rain forest canopy and reveals details of everyday life in the treetops where 75 percent of all rain forest species dwell. We will come eye-to-eye with monkeys some 200 feet above the forest floor and will view an abundance of plants and animals hidden at the tops of the tall rain forest trees.

Our afternoon includes a visit to **Heliconia Island**, which features over 70 different species and varieties of Heliconias. In addition to the Heliconia species that are native to Costa Rica, the garden also has an unusual variety of species native to other tropical zone countries around the world. These species are rarely seen any other place in Costa Rica. During our tour we will view and learn about other botanical treasures of Costa Rica, including fruit trees, bamboo groves, ferns, bromeliads, philodendrons, orchids and the unusual triangular palm and the traveler's palm (native to the Island of Madagascar). We will also have an opportunity to view a large number of colorful and exotic tropical bird species, as the region features over 400 species, as well as the beautiful blue morpho butterfly.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 3 LA SELVA BIOLOGICAL STATION - PINEAPPLE PLANTATION - CULTURAL CONNECTION - BAT 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. A knowledgeable bilingual naturalist guide will lead our tour. During our nature walk we will learn about the amazing natural history (flora and fauna) of the tropical forest.

Our day continues as we take 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.

Late this afternoon we will enjoy **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!!

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 multi-media 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 – CANOEING ON ARENAL LAKE – ARENAL VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK - HOT SPRINGS - ARENAL/LA FORTUNA (1 NIGHT)

This morning we will transfer to the Arenal area where we will enjoy a pleasant tour of **Canoeing on Arenal Lake**. 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 Anhinga.

After lunch we will travel around **Arenal Volcano** to a viewing spot where, if we are lucky, we will witness Arenal Volcano hiss and spray lava.

Late this afternoon we will visit the **Eco-Termales 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 ARENAL/LA FORTUNA – EL TRAPICHE SUGAR CANE TOUR – FROG POND - MONTEVERDE (2 NIGHTS)

This morning we travel around Lake Arenal to our hotel in Monteverde, which has earned its fame as one of the most outstanding wildlife sanctuaries in the world. Positioned atop the Continental Divide in Western Costa Rica, the preserve extends down both the Caribbean and the Pacific slopes. The resultant combination of climatic and geographic factors creates temperature and humidity gradients that change dramatically over relatively short distances. En route we will stop for a tour of the **El Trapiche Sugar Cane Plantation**. The El Trapiche Tour is located 4km northwest from Santa Elena Center in Monteverde, Puntarenas. This tourist center offers its visitors a guided tour, whose duration is approximately 2 hour 15 minutes and includes: a walk through a small forest where occasionally wildlife can be seen, as well as the opportunity to visit the on site establishments. During this guided tour the visitors will learn about the natural history, the sugar cane process and the coffee process. Within our locale, the visitors will also be able to see a banana plantation, a fish spawning facility as well as other farming crops (plantains, orange, macadamia and more). During the course of the tour the entire coffee plants and process is demonstrated; the drying grinding, peeling and roasting. At the end of coffee machines, the visitors are invited to take a ride in a real oxen pulled cart (if they so desire; if not, they can walk) to the Trapiche, worked by the same oxen. There they will be able to witness how sugar cane juice is processed. This process begins with grinding sugar cane and then cooking the sugar cane juice until get brown sugar. In this tour the visitors will be able to taste the sugar cane and all the sugar products also at the end they can taste a delicious cup of coffee from the farm. During this presentation we will also explain other typical Costa Rican traditions, for example: wood stove, marimba, el pilón, etc. as well as a demonstration of how liquor is extracted from sugar cane (distilled with pure water). This project originated with the idea to teach those who come to visit our country, some examples of Costa Rican traditions, as well as re-ignite interest for Costa Ricans in their beautiful culture in efforts to maintain our values.

We will enjoy some free time in the small town of Santa Elena before we visit the **Frog Pond of Monteverde**, where we will enjoy a tour to view and learn about a variety of species housed in a series of glass terrariums. Come to visit us and admire 20 species of amphibians such as the colorful poison arrow frog, the large marine toad and the famous red-eyed tree frog. Our mission is to give the opportunity to everyone to see the wonders of the amphibian world and work towards the conservation of frogs and toads of Costa Rica. Amphibians are declining and disappearing at an alarming rate. We need to act fast to ensure their future survival. This exhibit and research facility acts as a sanctuary for many endangered frog species and we hope that our studies will lead to insights regarding proper amphibian conservation. We are also committed to disseminating information regarding amphibian concerns and sharing with the visitors the beauty of this natural world. The Frog Pond donates part of each ticket purchase to the Costa Rica Conservation Foundation. These funds are used for the habitat protection. Your visit helps us to accomplish this goal.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 6 MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST RESERVE - BUTTERFLY GARDEN – SERPENTARIUM

We begin the day with a trail walk in the **Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve**, where we will view the diverse selection of flora and fauna as the reserve is home to six different vegetation communities, over 100 species of mammals, 400 species of birds, 120 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 2,500 species of plants (among them 500 different kinds of orchids).

Afterwards we will visit the **Monteverde Butterfly Garden**, which displays many of Costa Rica's most beautiful species. In addition to the hundreds of preserved and mounted butterflies, there's a garden and a greenhouse where we can observe live butterflies. Next we will enjoy the Monteverde Cloud Forest.

Our day concludes with a visit to the **Monteverde Serpentarium**, which features many of the snake species found in the region.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 7 MONTEVERDE - COROBICÍ RIVER TOUR - LAS PUMAS CAT ZOO - HACIENDA LODGE GUACHIPELÍN (2 NIGHTS)

This morning we depart Monteverde and travel to the province of Guanacaste. En route we will stop experience close-up more of Costa Rica's spectacular wildlife as we take a **Corobici River Float**. We will head down the river on a rubber raft, wearing life jackets, and enjoy spectacular and exotic sights of flora and fauna. We are very likely to spot numerous bird species, turtles, iguanas, monkeys and small crocodiles.

After lunch we will make a brief visit to nearby **Las Pumas Cat Zoo**, where Costa Rica's six different cat species (cougars, jaguars, jaguarondis, margays, ocelots and "tiger" cats) prowl safely behind chain linked fences. The zoo takes in orphaned, injured and confiscated cats.

We continue to the Hotel Hacienda Guachipelin, a truly eco-touristic lodge for adventure travelers and nature lovers. The hotel is surrounded by lush gardens with native trees, exotic flowers and many bird species, and it features wonderful views of both the Rincon de la Vieja Volcano and the Pacific Ocean. Natural hot springs, rivers, natural pools, virgin forests, jungle waterfalls, thermal waters, tropical forests with birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and volcanic mud pots are just some of the many natural attractions we will enjoy during our stay at the Hacienda.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 8 DAY OF ADVENTURE AT HACIENDA GUACHIPELIN

Today we will enjoy an amazing day of adventure on the grounds of Hacienda Guachipelin. Our day begins as we embark on the **Rio Negro Tubing Adventure**, where we take a 45-minute **Horseback Ride** through the dry forest and then a short walk to the base of La Victoria Waterfall. After a safety briefing, we will each get our own personal round raft and begin our tour (1 hour 30 minutes) down the white water rapids in the Rio Negro. At the conclusion we will take the horses back to the lodge. Next we will take the **Canyon Canopy Tour**, a must do, and one of the most exciting tours in Costa Rica. This tour combines the traditional canopy tour zip lines with rappelling, rock climbing, Tarzan swings, and the via ferrata, hanging bridges, all set in a majestic canyon formed by millions of years of erosion from the Blanco River. Our next stop will be the **Simbiosis Spa** in Rincón de La Vieja Volcano and National Park. Here we will benefit from the mysterious forces and healing energy of nature, as we experience the exciting and impressive activity of the volcano. Hidden in the middle of the forest we will find the thermal volcanic mud water pools (aprox. 104°F) that receive water directly from a volcanic mud pool and have therapeutic and cosmetic properties. We begin with a **Mud Bath**, by applying natural mud from the hot boiling ponds all over our bodies and then we go out into the sun to let the mud dry. Afterwards powerful hoses will remove the mud and we will take a dip in the relaxing **Thermal Water Springs**. Those that choose can also receive a relaxing massage from a professional therapist. All of this relaxation takes place in the middle of the jungle and next to a flowing and pristine river.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

DAY 9 DEPARTURE FROM LIBERIA

Our rewarding tour will come to an end as our private guide accompanies us to the LIR 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 | 1150 |
| 36-39 | Mid-size bus 40 seats | 1150 |
| 30-35 | Mid-size bus 40 seats | 1180 |
| 24-29 | Mid-size bus 34 seats | 1200 |
| 20-23 | Small bus 26 seats | 1210 |
| 18-19 | Coaster 22 seats | 1210 |
| 16-17 | Coaster 20 or 22 seats | 1230 |
| 14-15 | Coaster 20 or 22 seats | 1260 |
| 12-13 | Coaster 20 or 22 seats | 1300 |
| 10-11 | Coaster 20 or 22 seats | 1360 |

Triple reduction: 50
Single supplement: 270

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 departure day
- 🌐 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

Office hours: Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Time zone GMT-6)

Tel: +506 2245-0000

Cel.: +506 8368-2535

E-mail: info@stecmatours.com