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President's  Picks

Costa Rica Authentic

9 Days



We Don't Tell Stories Better, We Tell Better Stories®



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2015
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2013
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Welcome

“Costa Rica pretty much invented the phrase “eco-tourism” but we noticed that the destination has lost some of its luster in regards to the principles of innovative sustainable travel. I was very disappointed in a recent visit when I saw little of the Costa Rica I once knew. That motivated me to go back to the drawing board. We created this new Costa Rica journey to take you back in time to the place where the sustainable principles we use today were forged.”

Ashish Sanghrajka

Day By Day Itinerary

Day 1: San Jose, Costa Rica

Welcome to San Jose, Costa Rica’s capital and home to a quarter of its population. Popular attractions near the city include the Poas and Irazu Volcanoes, white water rafting, the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, Orosi and Cartago (home of the country’s largest Catholic church), and the renowned Rainforest Aerial Tram at the Braulio Carrillo National Park. San Jose is also home to the country’s top restaurants and some of its best entertainment. The downtown area offers interesting sights, such as the National Museum, Children’s Museum, Gold Museum, Jade Museum, National Theatre, Melico Salazar Theatre, parks, plazas, and the Central Avenue walking boulevard.

You arrive at the International Airport, and upon clearing immigration and customs, exit the airport to meet your guide and driver, who will be waiting for you. Board the van for a private, 30-minute drive to your hotel, the Finca Rosa Blanca Resort, which is both a coffee farm plantation and a luxurious inn that



crowns the central valley mountain highlands of Costa Rica. Located only a short distance from the San Jose International Airport, it has long offered eco-travelers a luxurious, sustainable boutique hotel experience. It offers an incomparable lodging experience with four extraordinary Master Suites and Villas and ten elegant Junior Suites. All are well-appointed rooms with Jacuzzi baths, sumptuous King beds as well as private verandas and decks overlooking the green

Central Valley, the volcanoes above. Secluded patios are surrounded by tropical gardens and flowers. The climate is perennially spring-like with sunshine every day and temperatures between 65F/18C to 82F/28C. Finca Rosa Blanca is a coffee farm, an art and architectural destination and a central hub to a multitude of activities and sightseeing. **Finca Rosa Blanca Coffee Plantation Resort – Junior Suite**



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Day 2: San Jose

Finca Rosa Blanca offers an exclusive and in-depth coffee tour of their own organic sustainable coffee farm where they grow their Estate Coffee. You are treated to a complete history of coffee while hiking through the tree-shaded plantation to the "Beneficio" where they process the cherry and put it out to dry on its way to roasting and grinding in their Casa Del Café. They also offer their own certified naturalist and guide, who can escort you on a bird-watching walk in the gardens and coffee farm as well as to many of the area's national parks, cloud forests, biological rain forest reserves and botanical gardens. You can join in the festivities, taste local food and touch the soul of the Tico culture through art and music as well as meet school children and families from the small towns surrounding Finca Rosa Blanca on culture and history excursion. **Finca Rosa Blanca Coffee Plantation Resort – Junior Suite (B)**

Day 3: San Jose / Pacuare River

Early this morning, you are picked up at your hotel for the approximately 2.5-hour drive to Pacuare River, stopping for a typical Costa Rican breakfast along the way. At the river, you will begin an exciting river rafting adventure to the Pacuare Lodge on Class II-III rapids, where you will enjoy a two night stay at this premier eco-lodge. Tucked away deep in the heart of Costa Rica's most pristine rainforest, on the riverbank, the Pacuare Jungle Lodge is surrounded by nature in its purest and most primitive state. The lodge was designed to blend with the surrounding environment with minimal impact, and has been recognized by the World Tourism Organization as one of only 65 examples throughout the world of good practice in sustainability and ecotourism.



Each palm-thatched River View Suite is spacious, 62 sq. meters/670 sq feet, with private terrace that opens on to landscaped native bush gardens and towering vine-draped trees. Around the corner a raised hardwood deck offers you stunning views of a massive wall of thick rainforest that cascades down a mountainside across the river. A luxuriously appointed canopy king-size bed with crisp 300-thread Egyptian cotton linens, and superior Beautyrest mattress® caters to a serene, restful night's sleep. A fully tiled en-suite bathroom comes with burnished copper fixtures and offers a nearly 360° view of the jungle. Nearby, a private alfresco shower with solar-heated water lets you soak up the quiet sounds and invigorating scents of the rainforest.

After lunch at the lodge, you can participate in an optional canopy tour; take a waterfall hike; or simply relax in your room. Dine on gourmet delicacies by candlelight and then visit the upstairs lounge for a cocktail or refreshment before retiring. **Pacuare Lodge, Aventuras Naturales - River Suite (B,L,D)**



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Day 4: Pacuare River – Cabecar Reserve

The Talamanca Mountains are home to the Cabecar Indians, the largest indigenous group in Costa Rica, and one that retains many of its traditional customs and beliefs. In contrast to many other indigenous groups, the Cabecar do not live in villages but prefer small family units scattered throughout this isolated region that includes the Pacuare Zone. From the Pacuare Lodge, it's possible to visit a shaman as well as isolated family groups to learn about their folklore and way of life, and enjoy the alluring tropical rainforest.

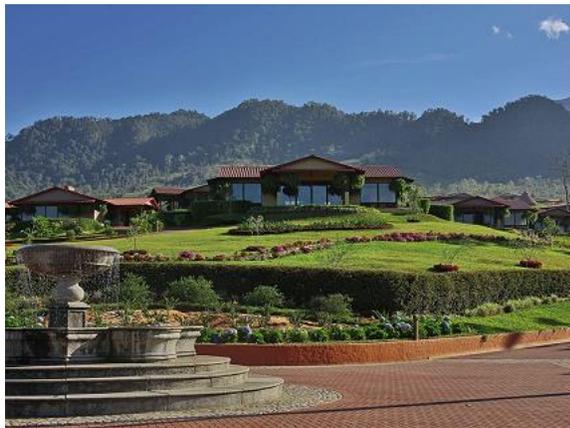


After a delicious breakfast, depart the lodge for an uphill climb through lush rainforest, crystal clear streams and stunning wildlife. During your journey, your naturalist guide will point out the many hidden secrets of this exotic natural habitat. After approximately two hours, the foliage thins and you are greeted by the laughter of children and the rhythmic clucking of hens. Once at the shaman's hut, your guide will introduce you to the Zutkia, a man of small stature yet wizened beyond his years. Depending on his mood, you will have the unique opportunity to listen to him

share his intimate knowledge of nature and the traditions and customs that have survived for centuries. **Pacuare Lodge, Aventuras Naturales - River Suite (B,L,D)**

Day 5: Pacuare River / Siquirres / Perez Zeledon

Depart mid-morning by raft for a fun-filled day of whitewater rafting, about 2.5 hours over Class III-IV rapids. Savor a picnic lunch along the river. At the river take-out spot, you will have a chance to change at our private facilities before being transferred by private van for the approximately three-hour drive to Alta Gracia and your boutique hacienda. This lush property sits high in the mountains of Pérez Zeledón, in the southern region of Costa Rica, one of the country's last to-be-discovered hideaways. The hacienda promotes the riches of the area's geography as part of its facilities, with only 80 of the 850 acres used for construction. It has its own airstrip and helipad, and is just 25 minutes by air from San José on its private airplanes. The scenic route by land, also extended by an exclusive fleet of private luxury vehicles, takes two



and a half hours of beautiful driving, either by the new "Costanera Road", or by the scenic Interamerican Mountain Pass.

Framed in tropical plants and overlooking the spectacular San Isidro valley, the spacious Deluxe Casita is the perfect getaway for couples and quartets. Enjoy a plush mattresses, walk-in closets, and 50" widescreen TVs. The hacienda offer a number of optional activities. Go horseback riding adventures such as learning about Costa Rica's cowboy culture on horseback, and riding through pastures and rainforests.

Set out on mountain bikes on lush unpaved trails that have something for everyone from moderate to a more adventurous and adrenaline filled ride! Visit the la Feria del Agricultor de San Isidro or the San Isidro farmer's market, a weekly event. Pérez Zeledón farmers gather at the San Isidro del General market and bring their freshest fruits. Available on Thursdays and Fridays only. Explore some of Costa Rica scenic waterfalls – hundreds of dramatic waterfalls can be found throughout the rainforests and mountainous areas. Several nearby breathtaking waterfalls make great destinations for a day hike and refreshing afternoon swim. Zip Lining is a unique and exciting way to explore Costa Rica's lush and fertile rainforest regions. There is nothing better than taking in the country's beautiful surroundings from the air, hanging from the treetops. Discover a national park or reserve. Considered one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, Costa Rica has some 20 natural parks, eight biological reserves, and a series of protected areas that captivate wildlife and nature lovers. **Alta Gracia Boutique Hacienda - Deluxe Casita (B)**

Day 6: Perez Zeledon - Waterfalls Ultra-light Tour

Do not miss this opportunity to fly an ultra-light, which take off from the hacienda's landing strip. Within minutes, you will enjoy the thrill of soaring over breath-taking landscapes and some of the most beautiful waterfalls found in the southern side of Costa Rica. Fly over the Nauyaca Waterfalls plus the mountains and the valley, and experience a unique feeling that can only be lived in an ultra-light flight. **Alta Gracia Boutique Hacienda - Deluxe Casita (B)**



Days 7/8: Perez Zeledon

These days are at leisure to enjoy the hotel optional activities mentioned above as well as cooking classes or a trip to a coffee plantation to learn firsthand the ways of planting and harvesting organic coffee in a sustainable manner. Go hiking, enjoy fitness classes or a massage at the spa, or simply relax in these delicious surroundings. **Alta Gracia Boutique Hacienda - Deluxe Casita (B)**

Day 9: Perez Zeledon / San Jose / Depart

Today, meet the driver to begin the three-hour drive through the mountains to the San Jose International Airport to connect with your onward flight. **(B)**

End of Travel Arrangements



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Included In The Tour Cost:

- Hotel accommodations as indicated in the itinerary, including taxes and service charges
- Meals as indicated (B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner)
- Services of an English speaking guide during all included excursions on a shared basis
- All transfers in an air conditioned vehicle
- Entrances at parks, sites, and monuments
- Comprehensive assortment of pre-tour materials and amenities
- Big Five's 24-hour White Glove Service® guest assistance
- Complimentary one year membership to One More Generation, including adoption of an endangered species

Not Included In The Tour Cost:

Any international airfare; Any passport or visa fees; Travel insurance (which is strongly recommended); Excess baggage fees; Items of a personal nature; Telecommunications fees; Laundry services; Gratuities to guides, drivers, and porters; Meals and services not specified.

Per Diem

Price starts from US\$700 per person per day, land only double occupancy.



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Big Five Edge

- **900 + Hours:** You are working with one of the most experienced groups of individuals in our industry. Big Five Destination Specialists receive *900+ hours of on-site and in-office on product training annually*, and are part of a diverse team assembled from 11 countries over 5 continents speaking a combined 10 different languages. With an average of 20 years' experience in the travel industry, our Destination Specialists answer 8 out of 10 questions immediately based on their personal experiences.
- **24 Hours a Day:** Every guest receives complimentary enrollment in our *24-hour White Glove Service® guest assistance* program. A team of specialists using proprietary software to track your progress is available 365 days from anywhere in the world. WGS® starts two weeks before your departure to help with anything from concierge services to travel emergencies. We proactively call every guest from North America to check in and assist with requests such as checking local weather; dealing with lost luggage or cancelled flights; or even the rare medical emergency. In the last 18 months, we have proactively reached out by telephone to our guests on tour to welcome them or assist with a specific requests almost 1,500 times... and counting.
- **Ahead of the Crowds:** Our Destination Specialists combine creativity with their impressive knowledge. As a result, we are on average two years or more ahead of the pack when it comes to *new and innovative travel ideas*. We focus on lesser known unique touring activities and emerging concepts that are not yet mainstream. We forge paths and take risks few others are willing to because we are committed to the principles of authenticity and sustainability. Most tour companies rely on an in-country counterpart for product ideas. At Big Five, we don't wait for anyone else. In 30 of our 44 destinations, and counting, we pioneered the itineraries and activities that are well ahead of current trends, and have taught our ground team, who actually live in those countries. We invest in our team, constantly sending them out to find new experiences that most overseas companies are unaware of because they rarely leave their home territories.
- **Booking in North America vs Booking Overseas:** Before you work directly with a company overseas, look closely to insure you are comparing apples, and not grapes to kumquats. What appears to be a \$1,000 price difference, actually is almost at par when you add in all the "extra fees" overseas companies put in their fine print. We don't charge merchant fees for using a credit card, most overseas companies will charge you 3% or more to pay by credit card. Your Big Five journey comes with complimentary enrollment in our 24-hour White Glove Service® guest assistance program up to 2 weeks before your departure; something no overseas company has the ability or capacity to do. We usually have more inclusions with fewer "optional" activities. You are backed by a comprehensive liability coverage plan that was written and is operated in North America. Booking overseas leaves you in the hands of the liability coverage that is written and operated in the country you are visiting, following local rules and guidelines, which may not be known to you. Make sure your apples are really apples – *otherwise it might cost you more than just money*.
- **Sustainability:** We believe in a sustainable future for all. Big Five has been consistently recognized as *a leader in the sustainable travel*, receiving accolades for our work to help change the world through travel. Big Five has also been honored by an internationally recognized travel network as the only company to twice receive an award for *Sustainable Leadership* after being judged against nearly 100 other companies by two separate independent panels.