

Rave Reviews for Explore Costa Rica

- ♥ “ Harry Pariser's *Explore Costa Rica* is an ideal, very highly recommended travel guide and planner. This informational compendium is wonderfully enhanced with color photography and covers everything from surfing to hiking, horseback riding to ballooning, cruising the countryside to wandering around the towns, and much, much more!” — *Midwest Books Review*
- ♥ “ ...(differs) from the others in its naturalist-oriented considerations of outdoors activities and unusual offbeat adventures...mention of transportation challenges and unusual accommodations leads the visitor away from well-worn paths.”
—*The Bookwatch*
- ♥ “ ...this extensive, up-to-date guide for Costa Rica is a welcome sight. Selected accommodations and restaurants span the scale from luxury to low budget, while the author's respectful, ecologically aware perspective contributes a progressive view of the sights and scenes encompassed in mountains and lowlands, rain forests, and beaches.”
— *American Library Association Booklist*
- ♥ “ The definitive book to read...well-written and well-researched...you are shown the best jungle hikes, the best beaches with top offshore diving and snorkeling locations, white water rivers suitable for rafting/kayaking (with recommended outfitters), tips for bird watching, and much more... I recommend that you buy this book.”—*Travel Books Review*
- ♥ “ Mr. Pariser....openly advocates cross-cultural involvement and contact with the people as a preferential path to deeper understanding.” — *Costa Rica Outdoors*
- ♥ “ *Explore Costa Rica* devotes special attention to natural attractions and outdoor activities as well as to environmental issues and concerns. Comprehensive guidebook covers accommodations, attractions, activities, adventure opportunities, transportation options, and plenty of useful travel tips. Author includes frank commentary on various aspects of Costa Rican life and issues such as tourism development controversies, environmental conservation and destruction and social mores. Complete background information covers Costa Rica's natural history, geography, culture, government, and economics.”— *Travel Weekly*
- ♥ “ Geared towards the nature-conscious traveler, this guide is loaded with practical information and candid observations.”— *Trips*
- ♥ “ This is a guide written with much attention to the biology and botany of the rainforest. The book is a wonderful experience. Enjoy.”— *Lee Beliveau, Bard's Ink*
- ♥ “This book will be one you'll want in your library and to carry with you on your next trip to Costa Rica.... The...references are excellent and good reading. If you want to expand your knowledge about Costa Rica..then buy a copy of this book and read it! You'll enjoy the light writing style.”—*Shirley Miller, Costa Rica Outlook*
- ♥ “ Pariser's book may be the best-balanced, most comprehensive guide of the entire Tico bunch....This is the one to take with you on your next trip around Costa Rica.”
— *Lan Sluder, Great Expeditions*

Explore Costa Rica

Harry S. Pariser



www.savethemanatee.com

This book is dedicated to the memory of David Brower (1912–2000), one of the world's greatest environmentalists.

<http://www.earthisland.org/brower>

and

This book is also dedicated to the memory of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya (1958–2006), who was slain in Moscow on October 7th, 2006. Anna's articles on the Russian atrocities against the Chechens and other abuses of the Russian government will be long remembered. We need more courageous journalists like her.

Manatee Press
P. O. Box 225001
San Francisco, CA 94122-5001

☎ (415) 665-4829

fax by request

single-copy orders *only*: 800-729-6423

www.savethemanatee.com

editorial@savethemanatee.com

About the Author

Mr. Pariser is a writer, artist, photographer, and graphic designer. Born and raised in southwestern Pennsylvania, he is a graduate of the College of Communications of Boston University. Mr. Pariser's first two books *Guide to Jamaica* and *Guide to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands* were published in 1986 and 1987. He has also penned guides to Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica.

Mr. Pariser has traveled extensively in Europe, Africa, Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean. He has lived in Japan: in Kyoto, in the historical city of Kanazawa (facing the Japan Sea), and in Kagoshima, a city at the southern tip of Kyushu across the bay from an active volcano.

His articles and photographs have appeared in *The Japan Times*, *Costa Rica Outlook*, *Belize First*, *Caribbean Travel & Life*, *the San Jose Mercury News*, *San Francisco Frontlines*, *Atevo.com*, *India Currents*, *JazzReview.com*, among others.

He enjoys painting, cooking, backpacking and hiking, photography, and listening to music—especially jazz, salsa, calypso, and African pop. His other interests range from politics to anthropology to linguistics to cinema, theater, and literature. He lives in the Inner Sunet area of San Francisco. Mr. Pariser received the Society of American Travel Writer's Lowell Thomas Award 1995 Best Guidebook Award (Silver) for his *Adventure Guide to Barbados*. Select articles by him are on the internet:

<http://www.HarryPariser.com>



Other Manatee Press Titles

Explore Barbados ISBN 1-893643-51-4

Explore Puerto Rico ISBN 1-893643-52-2

Explore the Virgin Islands ISBN 1-893643-54-9

Palm OS and Adobe Acrobat (PDF) versions are available at www.EcoCostaRica.com.

Text, design, and maps copyright (©) 2007 by Harry S. Pariser. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the author.

This guide focuses on recreational activities. As all activities contain elements of risk, the publisher, author, affiliated individuals and companies disclaim any responsibility for any injury, harm, or illness that may occur to anyone through, or by use of, the information in this book. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the information, but the publisher and author do not assume — and hereby disclaim — any liability for any loss or damage caused by errors, omissions, misleading information or potential travel problems caused by this guide, even if such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

ISBN 1-893643-55-7



Cover set in Sabon. Text set in Sabon and Avenir. Maps set in Avenir. Design by Harry S. Pariser. Cover photo by Jack Ewing of Hacienda Barú in Dominical. All other photos by Harry S. Pariser, except where indicated otherwise. Cover design by Harry S. Pariser.

Photos and maps by Harry S. Pariser are available for license:
Contact the publisher, at editorial@savethemanatee.com or (415) 665-4829.

A Note on Prices

Establishments for which no prices are listed are classified as follows: **low budget** (less than \$20 d), **inexpensive** (\$20–40 d), **moderate** (\$41–50 d), **expensive** (\$51–\$100 d), **luxury** (\$101–140), and **ultra-luxury** (over \$140 d). All prices are high-season and do not include taxes and meals unless specified otherwise. Holiday season rates may be higher, and off-season rates may be lower. Always confirm prices and ask about surcharges for credit cards and/or if they are accepted. Some places may offer a cash discount. Most have hot showers with private bath unless specifically noted. Visit the website (if available) to learn more about the hotel before booking. All prices are subject to change.

E-mail and web sites are current as of publication of this book. Launch a search should these prove invalid.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go out to Darril Tighe (who did a fine job of proofreading), Daniel Peyer, Bernie Judd, Jack Ewing, Barbara Hartung, Paul Collar, Monic Chabot, Colocha, Geoff McCabe, Pirena, Daryl Loth, Sergio Miranda, Pat Bliss, Robbie Felix, Jose Pelleya, John Aspinall, Jay Brodart, Scott Oliver, Jonana and Michael Bresnan, Bill and Nadine Beard, Ron Borthwick, Joy Rothke, Joan Inman, Micky Gardner Amos Bien, Michael S. Kaye, Amos Bien, Marco Montoya (Grano de Oro), Daryl Loth (photo and Tortuguero Revisions), Andy Veit, Milton and Diana Lieberman, Catherine Evans, Tucker Comstock, Gayle Zorn (Tortilla Flats), Jay Quisenberry, Arlie Haig, Jonas Spahn (Friends of the Osa), Jaview Mora Segura, Lauren and Toby Cleaver, Lana & her mother, Steve Harley, Edward Pariser, Arthur Koch, Rosemary Cantrell, Michael Brady, Henri Scholl Sprockel (Arenal Observatory Lodge), Leo Clifton, Terry and Katya at Lookout Inn, Rennie Leone, John Honeyman, Patricia Levinson, Tucker Comstock, Scott Green, David Stannard, Joan Inman, Adrian Kreupling, Jacques Bertrand, Marco Thomas, Alex Khajavi, Greg and Brian Chavez. A final thank you goes out to my mother who always worries about me.

Reader's Response Form

Explore Costa Rica

I found your book rewarding because _____

The best places I stayed in were (explain why) _____

I found the best food at _____

Some good and bad experiences I had were _____

Will you return to Costa Rica? _____.

If not, why not? _____

If so, where do you plan to go? _____

I purchased this book at _____

I learned about this book from _____

I would like to have an electronic version of this book? _____.

Please include any other comments on a separate sheet and mail completed form to Manatee Press or e-mail:
comments to editorial@savethemanatee.com.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1	Visas, Services, and Health	134
Geography	1	Phone, Mail, Telephone	136
Climate	5	Internet Access	136
Seasons and Zones	6	Broadcasting and Media	139
Earthquakes	7	Health and Hygiene	141
Flora and Fauna	7	Money and Shopping	143
Plant Life and Tropical Forests	8	Customs	145
Rainforest Ecosystems	9	Life, Language, & Study	146
Trees and Tropical Vegetation	14	Conduct	158
Animal Life	20	Other Practicalities	167
Mammals	20		
Reptiles and Amphibians	27	San José	171
Birds	31	San José Transport	172
Insects	36	Downtown Sights	175
Sealife	41	Outlying Sights	183
The Coral Reef Ecosystem	43	San José Accommodations	185
History	46	Budget Accommodations	185
Government	67	Low-Budget Accommodations	186
Economy	69	Gay And Lesbian Accommodation	189
Agriculture	73	Accommodation by Area	189
The People (Los Costarricenses)	82	Barrio Escalante Accommodations	189
Minority Groups	85	Coca-Cola & Vicinity	190
Religion	91	Parque Morázon Accommodations	191
Food	93	National Museum/Barrio La California	191
Other Food	95	Barrio Amon Accommodations	192
Drinks and Beverages	98	Barrios Otoya and Aranjuez	193
Dining Practicalities	99	Accommodations	193
Sports and Recreation	100	Paseo de Colón Accommodations	195
Water Sports	100	Sabana Accommodations	196
Competitive Sports	105	Los Yoses Accommodations	196
Other Sports	107	San Pedro Accommodations	197
		San José to the Airport	198
		Near San José	198
Costa Rican Practicalities	109	San José Dining and Food	200
Youth Hostels	111	Outlying Food and Dining	207
Arrival	111	San José Entertainment	207
Tours	113	Other San José Practicalities	212
Internal Transport	121	From San José	219
Land Transport	122	Vicinity of San José	220
Car Rental	124	Carpintera Reserve	221
Accommodations	127	Pueblo Antiguo	221
Entertainment	132	Parque del Este	221

Moravia	221	Irazú Volcano National Park	274
Coronado	222	Valle de Orosi (Orosi Valley)	276
Aserrí	223	Tapantí-Macizo National Park	279
El Rodeo	223	Palomo	280
Nacientes Palmichal	224	La Casa del Soñador	280
Guaitil de Acosta	224	Ujarrás	281
Reserva Guayabo	224	Turrialba	282
Arbofilia	225	Guayabo National Monument	286
Los Juncos	225	Other Attractions Near Turrialba	287
Escazú	225	Whitewater Rafting	287
Pico Blanco Reserve	230	CATIE	288
The Meseta Central	233	Parque Viborana	289
Alajuela	234	Siquirres	289
Alajuela to San Ramón	241	Parque Nacional Barbilla	289
La Garita and Environs	241	The Northern Zone	291
Los Chorros	242	The Sarapiquí Area	291
Ojo de Agua	242	Puerto Viejo De La Sarapiquí	291
The Butterfly Farm	243	Area Outdoor Adventure Activities	293
Rancho San Miguel	243	La Virgen	293
Atenas	243	Sarapiquí Outdoor Adventures	294
Grecia	245	Sarapiquí Nature Lodges	294
Vicinity of Grecia	246	Rara Avis	294
Sarchí	246	La Selva Biological Reserve	295
Naranjo	248	Selva Verde River Lodge	296
Zarcelero	248	La Quinta De Sarapiquí	297
Bosque de Paz Rain/Cloud Forest	249	Centro Neotrópico Sarapiquí	297
Vista del Valle Plantation Inn	249	El Gavilán Lodge	297
Palmares	249	Monteverde and Environs	297
San Ramón de Alajuela	250	Monteverde Sights and Activities	301
Bosque Nuboso de Los Angeles	251	Santa Elena Sights	301
Valle Escondido Lodge	251	Monteverde Attractions	302
Poás Volcano National Park	252	Monteverde Outdoor Adventures	302
Heredia	256	Monteverde Forest Reserves	303
Vicinity of Heredia	259	Monteverde Practicalities	305
Monte de La Cruz	261	Santa Elena	309
Braulio Carrillo National Park	262	Vicinity of Monteverde	315
Rafting on the Pacuare	264	Ecologde San Luis	315
From Braulio Carrillo to Guápiles	265	Catarata San Luis	317
Casa Río Blanco Rainforest Lodge	266	Cañitas	317
Cartago	268	Monte Los Olivos	317
Vicinity of Cartago	270	Parque Nacional Arenal and Vicinity	317
Route of the Saints	271	Tilarán	318
San Gerardo de Dota	273	Vicinity of Arenal	324
San Pablo	274	Arenal Volcano	324

Tabacón Springs Resort & Spa	326	Playa Tamarindo	377
La Fortuna	326	Vicinity of Tamarindo	386
Ciudad Quesada (San Carlos)	332	Playa Avellanas	386
Laguna del Lagarto	335	Playa Negra	387
Maquenque National Park	336	Playa Junquillal	388
Caño Negro Refuge	337	Playa Nosara	389
South From San Carlos	339	Playa Guiones Accomodation	390
San Rafael de Guatuso	339	Ostional National Accommodations	392
Ujuminica	340	Ostional National Wildlife Reserve	394
Northwest (Guanacaste)	341	Bahía Garza	396
Guanacaste Practicalities	343	Playa Sámara	396
Transport Options	344	Playa Carrillo	400
Nicoya Peninsula	345	Monte Alto Forest Reserve	401
Cañas Area	346	Playa Coyote	401
Rafting on the Corobicí	346	Punta Islita	402
Las Pumas	346	Playa San Miguel	402
Las Juntas de Abangares	347	Santa Cruz	403
La Ensenada Lodge	347	Nicoya	404
Lomas Barbudal Biological Reserve	347	Barra Honda National Park	405
Miravalles Protected Zone	349	Coopeortega	407
Parque Nacional Tenorio	350	Palo Verde National Park	407
La Carolina Lodge	350	Refugio Palo Verde	408
Heliconias Lodge and Rainforest	350	The Southern Nicoya Peninsula	409
Liberia	350	Cerro Escondido	409
Rincón de la Vieja National Park	354	Playa Naranjo	410
Buena Vista Lodge	357	Paquera	410
Sector Santa Rosa	358	Curú National Wildlife Refuge	410
Guanacaste Conservation Area	361	Bahía Ballena/Tambor	412
La Cruz	362	Tango Mar Resort and Club	412
Isla de Boñanos Wildlife Refuge	363	Playa Montezuma	413
Heading for Nicaragua	363	Cabo Blanco	417
Northern Nicoya Peninsula Beaches	364	Playa Santa Teresa	419
Playas del Coco	364	Playa Carmen	421
Playa Hermosa	367	Playa Mal Pais	422
Playa Panamá	369	Playa Manzanillo	423
The Papagayo Project	369		
Heading South to Flamingo	370		
Matapalo	370		
Brasilito	371		
Playa Conchal	371		
Playa Flamingo	372		
Playa Potrero	373		
Playa Pan de Azucar	375		
Parque Nacional	375		
Las Baulas National Park	375		
		The Central Pacific	425
		Puntarenas	425
		Vicinity of Puntarenas	429
		The Offshore Islands	429
		Islas de Tortuga	429
		Isla Chira	430
		Isla San Lucas	430
		The Biological Preserves	430
		Isla Gitana	431

Carara National Park	431	Golfito Sailfish Rancho	497
Attractions Near Carara	432	Cabinas Caña Blanca	497
Pacific Coast Beach Towns	433	South from Golfito (Punta Burica)	497
Punta Leona	433	Playa Zancudo	497
Playa Herradura	434	Pavones	499
Tárcoles	434	Tiskita Lodge	500
Playa Jacó	434	Casa Punta Banco	501
Playa Hermosa	440	Ciudad Neily/Villa Neily	501
Parque Nacional La Cangreja	442	Coto 47	502
Parrita	442	Paso Canoas	502
Playa Esterillos Este	443	Wilson Botanical Gardens	502
Playa Esterillos Centro	443	San Vito de Java	503
Playa Esterillos Oeste	443	Osa Peninsula/Corcovado	505
Playa Bejuco	443	San Pedrillo Sector/Station	509
Playa Bandera (Playa Palma)	443	Sirena and Vicinity	509
Quepos and Manuel Antonio	444	Los Patos, La Palma, and Vicinity	511
Manuel Antonio	459	La Leona Sector	512
Outdoor Activities	459	Puerto Jiménez	512
Activities near Quepos	460	Playa Preciosa (Playa Planatares)	517
Heading South from Quepos	461	Enroute to Carate	518
Silencio Community Ec lodge	461	Lapa Ríos	519
Matapalo	462	Matapalo	519
Parque Reptilandia	463	Carate	521
Finca Ipe	463	Corcovado Lodge Tent Camp	522
Hacienda Barú	463	Drake Bay and Vicinity	523
Playa Dominical	464	Drake Bay Wilderness Camp	524
Ballena Uvita National Marine Park	470	Aguila de Osa	524
South From Uvita	472	Albergue Jinetes de Osa	525
Ojochal/Playa Tortuga	474	La Paloma Lodge	525

The Southern Zone 477

San Isidro de El General	477	Drake Bay Outdoor Activities	526
Chirripó National Park	481	Lodges S of Drake Bay	526
Vicinity of Chirripó	486	Caño Island Biological Reserve	528
From San Isidro to Golfito	487	Isla del Coco National Park	530
Finca Anael/Dúrika	487	La Amistad International Park	532
Piedras Blancas National Park	487	Palmar Norte/Palmar Sur	534
Golfito	489	Sierpe	534
Along the Golfo Dulce	493	Boruca and Rey Curré	536
Playa Cacao	494		
Playa San Josecito/Casa Orquideas	494		
The Golfito Animal Sanctuary	495		
Dolphin Quest	495		
Golfo Dulce Lodge	495		
Playa Nicuesa Rainforest Lodge	495		

The Caribbean Coast 537

Barra del Colorado	539
Tortuguero National Park	543
On Your Own	545
Tour Operators	546
On Your Own From Moín	547

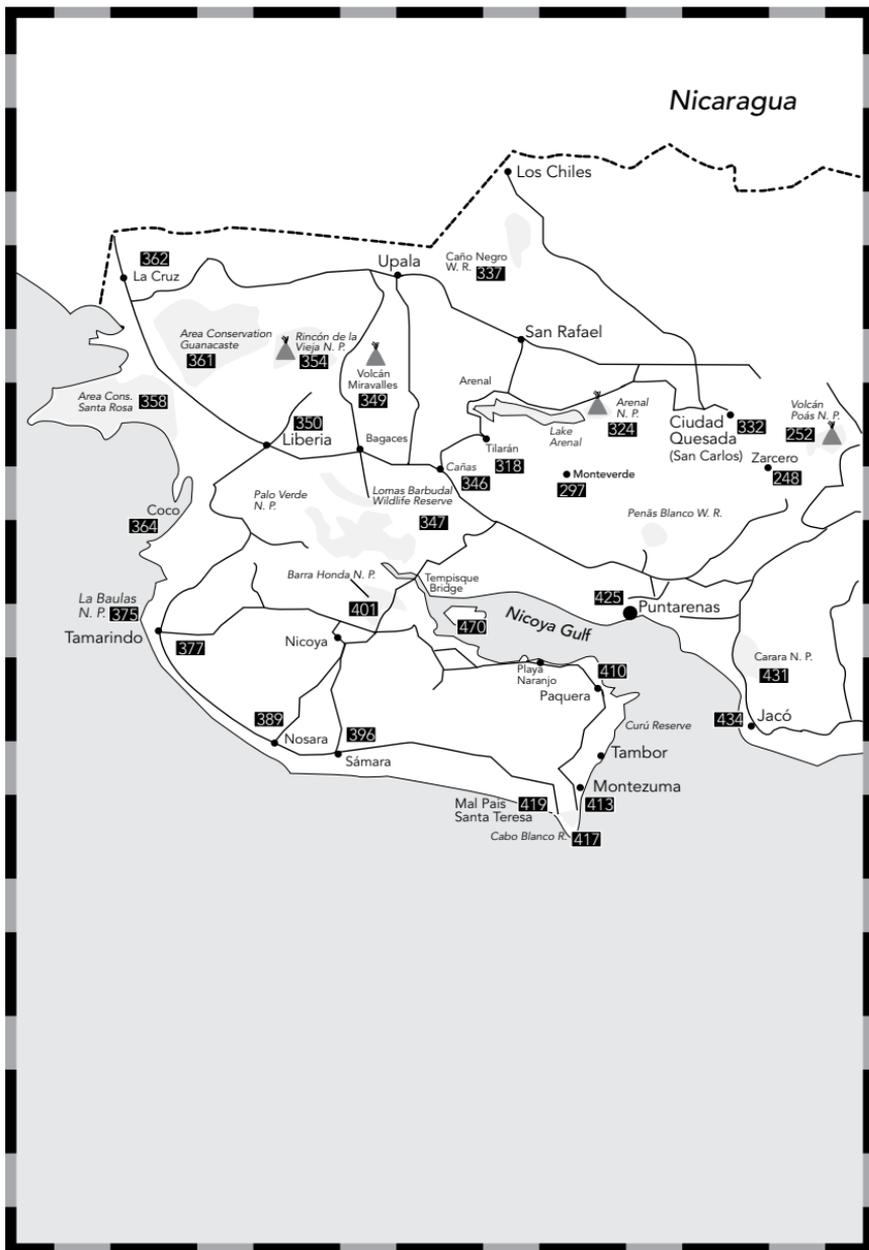
From Cariari and La Pavona	548	Puerto Viejo Vicinity	580
By Air	550	Punta Cocles/Playa Cocles	580
Lodges	551	Punta Uva	583
Tortuguero Village	553	Manzanillo/Gandoca	584
Tortuguero Activities	554	Manzanillo Outdoor Activities	586
Other Practicalities	556	For Panama	587
Parismina	556		
Limón	557		
Heading South from Limón	563		
Selva Bananito Lodge	563		
Aviarios del Caribe	564		
Hitoy Cerere Biological Reserve	564		
Cahuita National Park	564		
Bribri	573		
Puerto Viejo de Talamanca	573		

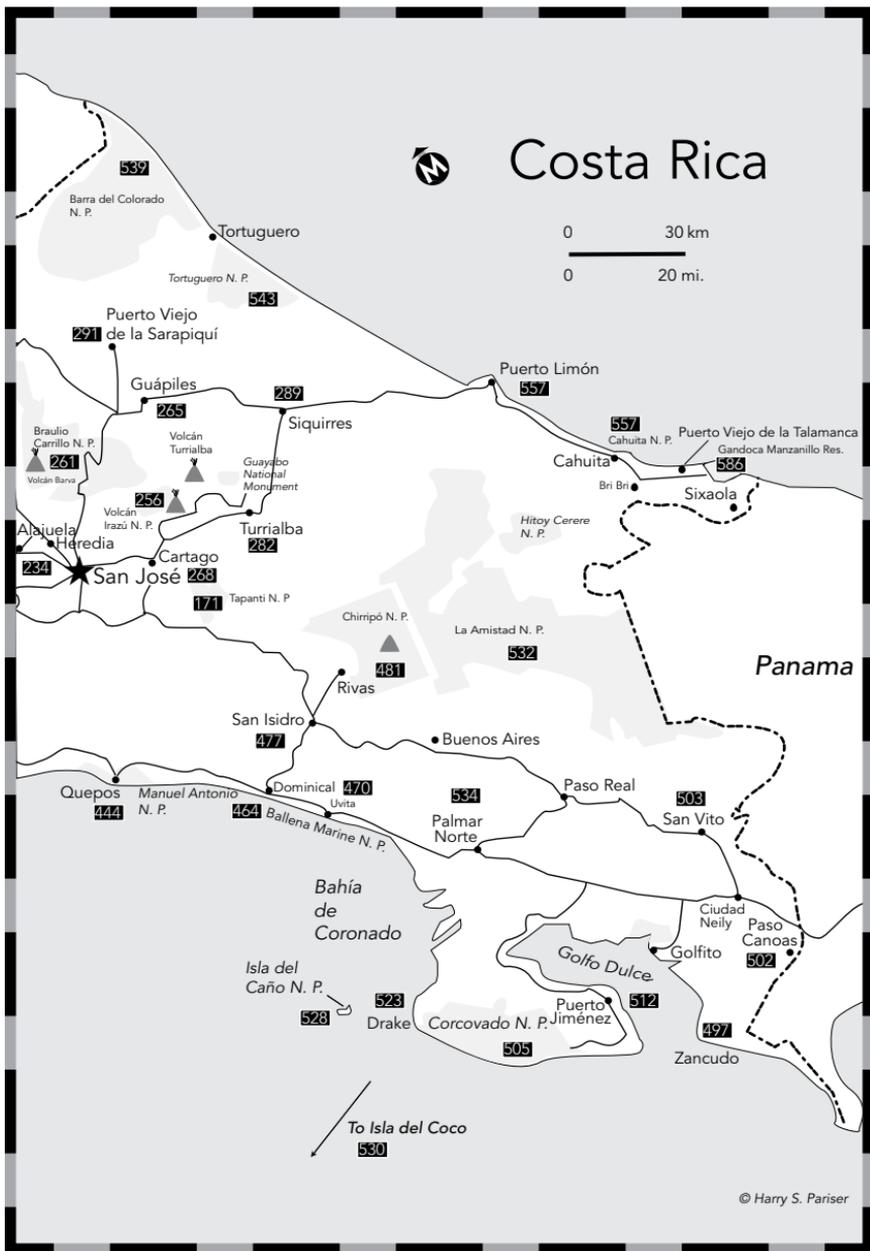
Appendix

Spanish Vocabulary	589
Glossary	592
Booklist	593
Costa Rica Bus Guide	597
Index	609

Explore Costa Rica: List of Maps

Costa Rica	2	Tamarindo	378
Costa Rica Provinces	68	Montezuma	415
Costa Rica Beaches	101	Cabo Blanco	418
Downtown San José	102	Puntarenas	427
East of Cultural Plaza	177	Manuel Antonio	446
Paseo de Colón Area	179	Quepos	458
Near San José	231	Dominical Area	467
Central Alajuela	234	Uvita	475
The Meseta Central	235	Chirripó National Park	483
Cartago and Turrialba Area	266	Golfito Area	491
Irazú National Park	275	Corcovado National Park	504
Guayabo National Monument	287	Sirena	512
Monteverde	300	Puerto Jiménez	575
Downtown Santa Elena	310	Carate	520
Arenal and Monteverde Area	314	The Caribbean Coast	536
La Fortuna	327	Tortuguero National Park	542
Caño Negro Reserve	338	Puerto Limón	560
The Northwest (Guanacaste)	342	Talamanca Region	574
Lomas Barbudal Reserve	348	Puerto Viejo	575





539
Barra del Colorado N. P.

Tortuguero

Tortuguero N. P.

291
Puerto Viejo de la Sarapiquí

265
Guápiles

289
Siquirres

557
Puerto Limón

261
Volcán Barro
Braulio Carrillo N. P.

256
Volcán Irazú N. P.

282
Turrialba

557
Cahuita N. P.

586
Puerto Viejo de la Talamanca

Gandoca Manzanillo Res.

234
Alajuela

268
Heredia

268
Cartago

171
Tapanti N. P.

Bri Bri

Hitoy Cerere N. P.

481
Chirripó N. P.

532
La Amistad N. P.

Panama

477
San Isidro

Buenos Aires

444
Quepos

Manuel Antonio N. P.

470
Dominical

Uvita

464
Ballerena Marine N. P.

534
Palmar Norte

Paso Real

503
San Vito

Bahía de Coronado

523
Isla del Caño N. P.

528
Drake

512
Golfo Dulce

505
Corcovado N. P.

512
Puerto Jiménez

Ciudad Neily

502
Paso Canoas

Golfito

497
Zancudo

■ Symbols ■

↖	North	FAP	Full American Plan
☎	Phone	OW	one way
⚡	Warning	RT	round trip
i	authentic Italian cuisine	ha	hectare(s)
e	Community-run ecolodge	L	left
👨👩👧👦	Good with children	R	right
s	single	km	kilometer(s)
db	double	mi.	mile(s)
t	triple	ICT	C. R. Tourism Institute
C	<i>Calle or colones</i>	4WD	Four-wheel-drive

■ Abbreviations ■

N	North	t	triple
S	South	C	<i>Calle or colones</i>
E	East	OW	one way
W	West	RT	round trip
pd	per day	ha	hectare(s)
pw	per week	L	left
pm	per month	R	right
pp	per person	km	kilometer(s)
s	single	mi.	mile(s)
db	double	ICT	C. R. Tourism Institute

check for internet updates

Explore Costa Rica: Fast Facts: A-Z

Accommodation — Every type of hotel in every price range is available as are some campgrounds. The nicest hotels and lodges tend to be small, intimate affairs.

Area Code — To dial Costa Rica from outside the country dial 1-506 and the number. Omit the area code when dialing within Costa Rica.

Art and artists— There are a number of fine artists and craftspeople in Costa Rica. The best places to visit studios are in the Monteverde and Escazú areas.

Business Hours — Generally from 8-noon and 1-5 or 2-5. Many close on Sun. as do restaurants. Banks are generally open Mon. to Fri. from 9-3.

Camping—There are few organized campsites. Tent-supplied “gourmet” camping is an up-and-coming phenomenon.

Clothes —Informal is the rule. You won’t need much if any in the way of warm clothing.

Car rental — Cars may be rented at the airport, in San José, and in select location such as Liberia (Guanacaste) and Quepos (Manuel Antonio).

Credit Cards — Generally accepted. However may be subject to a surcharge by hotels.

Currency—The Costa Rican *colón* is divided into 100 *centavos*. You will get around US\$1 = C 550, more or less. (The currency devalues around 7-10% each year). Cash is better than traveler’s checks in terms of rates, but the difference is small.

Departure tax — US\$26 (Can be paid with credit card).

Driving — Driving is on the same side as in the US. Valid drivers licenses are required. A credit card is required to rent a vehicle.

Electricity —110 Volts AC

Internet —Access is very widespread, including satellite access in remote locations. There are a number of cafes in San José and the Central Valley. Some hotels will allow you to send and receive e-mail messages. Some offer free wireless and/or internet access.

Language — Spanish is the official language. English is widely spoken at touristic spots, but Spanish is important for getting around. There are a large number of schools which teach Spanish.

Laundry — Laundromats are scarce. Most hotels will do laundry for a fee. Save by bringing some detergent and washing a few small items yourself.

Liquor Laws —Alcohol is available from any store. Dry laws are in effect for two days during Easter and two days before and after a presidential election.

Mail — Expect it to take at least a week to the States. Rates are cheap.

Maps — Good maps are hard to find. Obtain the ITMB (or other) map before arriving.

Marriage — Possible to do it here. Costa Ricans often live “common law,” thus depriving divorce lawyers of income.

Newspapers—*The Miami Herald* (US\$1.25) is available daily in tourist centers. The weekly tabloid *The Tico Times* (US\$1) is the only local English-language read.

Pets—Leave them at home if at all possible. Otherwise, you will require proof of rabies and distemper vaccinations.

Radio/TV—Many tourist hotels have satellite TV or cable. There are over a hundred AM and FM radio stations, but reception can be poor in the hinterlands.

Restrooms/toilets—Called *servicios* or *sanatorios*. “Caballeros” means men and “Damas” means women.

Ruins—Nothing outstanding. The most interesting archaeological site is at Guayabo National Monument. The Jade and Gold museums in San José have outstanding collections of artifacts. If in the area, the unusual stone spheres near Palmar Sur are worthy of a visit.

Taxes—Government tax of 16.39% is added to accommodation. Taxes and tips are added to food in all but the smallest of restaurants.

Taxis—Metered in San José. Rides in rural areas tend to be expensive for the distance.

Telephones—Service is good. Internal calls are inexpensive. Phone cards are available and may be used at phones marked “chip.” Pay phones are scarce. Dial 116 to reach an international operator. For calling card and collect calls reach AT&T at 0-800-011-4114, Sprint at 0-800-013-0213, and Canada Bell at 0-800-015-1162. To call Costa Rica from the US dial 1, then 506, then the local number.

Theft—Don’t walk around San José at night with valuables. Never leave anything of value in a vehicle, not even for a moment! Pickpockets frequent buses.

Time—Costa Rica operates on Central Standard Time (six hours behind GMT, Greenwich mean time).

Tipping—A 10% service charge is generally already added to restaurant bills so added tipping is not necessary. Bellhops receive around 200 *colónes* per bag. Taxi drivers are not tipped. Many hotels leave envelopes in the room with which to tip maids (\$1 pd). Guides are often tipped.

Visas—With a few exceptions, you will not need a visa. Entry permits are valid for 30 days.

Water—Generally safe to drink. The more cautious may prefer to stick to bottled water. If you are staying at a lodge, ask at the front desk about the safety of the water.