



Costa Rica Fun Guide

Adventure and Activities to Fill Your Days.

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Shopping (like who cares...)

If Dolce & Gabbana, Brooks Brothers, and Armani are your regular haunts, then the concrete jungle wins out over the rainforest as far as shopping is concerned. Yes, you can go shopping in Costa Rica. The best selection of high quality goods and fashions in Costa Rica can be found in *Escazu*, a suburb of San Jose that has been dubbed “*the Beverly Hills of Costa Rica.*”

Here you can find large American-style malls, cinemas, restaurants (*TGIF Friday's, Bobby Rubino's, Hooters, McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, & Burger King*), high-end home furnishings, custom tailoring, shoes-to-die-for, and more. There's even a Ferrari dealer (*why? we just don't know...*)

Sticking a bit closer to home, Hacienda Matapalo's Commercial Center will be offering a grocery store, pharmacy, banking, restaurant & bar, a bakery, liquors, plus additional businesses for... interior design and home furnishings, real estate services, resort rentals & tour services, surf shop, and more.

Keep checking Hacienda Matapalo's website for project updates and announcements for upcoming web seminars designed to keep you informed about living in Costa Rica! *Go to www.HaciendaMatapalo.com!*

Adventure & Activities to Fill Your Days

Whitewater Rafting

Come prepared for adventure and get some adrenalin pumping!

White water rafting is one of the most popular experiences for folks visiting Costa Rica. Whether you're young or young at heart, this thrill ride will leave you feeling exhilarated.

It's no problem if you are a novice; a veteran river guide will take you down Class III and IV rapids in sturdy and manageable rafts that accommodate 2 to 6 people.

You'll start the day with a 4x4 excursion up into the mountains where the air and water is cool. At the river headwaters you'll receive an easy instruction course and don a required flotation vest and helmet before heading into the river. The next couple of hours will provide you plenty of pulse pounding excitement and some calm moments before the next set of rapids.

For seasoned rafters there are some challenging Class V rapids in both the Savegre and Naranjo rivers. Class V tours are seasonal, so check with Concierge Service for availability.

Tours are available daily.

Contact Hacienda Matapalo's Concierge Services for reservations and times.

Canopy Zip line Tours

*When you were a kid, did you ever
pretend you could fly?*

Sail high above the rainforest canopy and experience Costa Rica's most popular adventure sport: the

canopy zip line. This exhilarating tour was actually invented in Costa Rica!, This is an adventure for people of all ages and interests, and is certainly one of the highlights of Costa Rica.

Canopy tours provide tourists with a unique activity and ecological experience! Young children can be carried by the guides and you don't need to be in great physical condition.

This tour offers an adventurous tourist the opportunity to ascend into the forest canopy and see jungle life from a perspective available previously to only a select few researchers and photographers.

Diving and Snorkeling

Discover the incredible beauty and diversity of life that inhabits the waters of Costa Rica. Divers will find an amazing array of locations and tours to fit just about any schedule and budget.

Just south of Hacienda Matapalo, you can explore the coral reefs of Ballena National Park or take in the waters off Caño Island which have the some of the most beautiful sites for diving and snorkeling in Costa Rica.

Dive addicts will want to take a multi-day trip to ISLA DEL COCO, where many scenes from the movie JURASSIC PARK were filmed. Isla del Coco offers the most incredible dive experience in Costa Rica.

The waters and variety of sea life here have been compared to those of the Gallapagos islands.

Costa Rica's Caribbean waters also offer many dive sites and snorkeling areas that are perfect for weekend tours.

For those who haven't yet taken the plunge, PADI Certified dive instruction will be available to help you discover a new world that waits under the surface. Just contact Hacienda Matapalo's Concierge Services for details.

Surfing

Dominical... Manuel Antonio... Matapalo... Jaco... Pavones,... Playa Hermosa... Mal Pais... Tamarindo... Playa Negra... Nosara...

Listing all the great surf breaks in Costa Rica could fill an entire newsletter.

If you surf, then you already know that Costa Rica is THE PLACE to go in Central America. It's a year-round endless summer of incredible waves in a variety of locations.

If you want to learn to surf, there are an abundance of 'surf schools' up and down the coastline. You don't have to be a kid to take lessons, being young at heart is what it takes.

Whale watching

For untold millennia the waters off Costa Rica's Central-Southern Pacific Coast have played host to migrating pods of Humpback Whales during their annual mating ritual.

Every year northern Humpbacks travel south from the frigid Alaskan seas and southern Humpbacks head north from the stormy ocean between South America and the Antarctic to converge in the warmth of the tropics.

What ensues after their arrival is nothing short of spectacular as these leviathans launch themselves out of the water and come crashing down in an explosive display to attract Ms. Right.

The whales can be seen from November to March and from July to September. In addition to the Humpbacks, smaller Pilot Whales are frequently spotted and Dolphins are seen all year around.

Whale watching boat and snorkeling tours can be arranged for anyone.

Beaches

There are 26 miles of virtually untouched, undeveloped beach directly across the street from Hacienda Matapalo, with only a few small clusters of buildings. If you want to swim with no surf, 15 minutes away is Manuel Antonio National Park with its many peaceful coves.

South of us, starting at Dominical, are endless small caves and unique beaches to discover. Las Ventanas is an absolute must to see and spend the day.

Mountain Biking and Cycling

Cycling is BIG in Costa Rica.

With miles and miles of roads winding through foothills and flat coastal plains to challenging mountain roads, Costa Rica is a cyclist's dream. Cycling Clubs can be found across the country and it's not uncommon to see groups of 40 or more riders heading over to Quepos from San Jose.

Whether you like to burn up miles of roadway or go off-roading down single-track mountain paths, you'll hit your stride surrounded by lush beauty and moderate temperatures. Join other *cyclistas* from Hacienda Matapalo and take your *bicicleta* on an early morning ride down the Costanera Highway south to Uvita, or maybe a dash to Quepos and back before lunch. Blaze new mountain trails and splash across streams as you seek out spectacular ocean views. *It's all fun, and a great way to stay in shape.*

Entertaining Day Tours

Sunset Cruise

Explore the small islands and secluded bays of the Central Pacific Coast that are only accessible by boat. Go snorkeling and see vividly colored tropical fish, or maybe you'll spot some migrating humpback whales and playful dolphins.

An afternoon sunset cruise on the calm waters off the coast is an amazing and relaxing time for all. The experience of sailing is just what you need to calm the body and soothe the soul, caressed by balmy breezes and rocked by gentle waves carrying your boat.

Imagine sharing this special time with a few close friends and toasting another beautiful sunset with a glass of your favorite wine. This special time can be set aside just for you

Morning and sunset cruises are available daily. Just contact tour services at Hacienda Matapalo to reserve your passage.

Butterfly Farms

Of all the insects, none elicit pleasure and curiosity more readily than butterflies. Like the abundance of verdant mountains and beaches, butterflies are ever present during one's visit to Costa Rica. There is nowhere one goes, whether a 3,000 meter volcanic summit or the arid plains of Guanacaste where butterflies are not present.

Costa Rica is world famous for protecting its flora and fauna, and butterflies are no exception. Approximately 90% of the Butterfly species in Central America exist in Costa Rica.

You'll see plenty of the vibrant Blue Morphos at Hacienda Matapalo, plus a host of other brightly colored cousins flittering about.

Visit a Butterfly Farm and learn about the life stages of these beautiful insects. See them emerge from their pupae and spread their wings. Take delight in being surrounded by hundreds of butterflies in flight. Fun for kids of all ages.

Mangrove Tours

One of the most popular tours on the Pacific Coast is the *Damas Island Estuary and Mangrove Boat Tour*. Here you can get “interactive” with the tropical rainforest and delicate mangrove ecosystem. This adventure through Costa Rican natural history –and its flora and fauna– is highly recommended for any naturalist, young or old, who wants to experience firsthand the pulse of the mangrove ecosystem.

Travel comfortably and peacefully in modern, ultra-quiet estuary boats as the wildlife comes to you. Experience curious families of monkeys as they migrate across the mangroves in search of food and adventure – *and don't be surprised if they try to hitch a ride with you!*

Highly trained, bilingual guides will provide an informative and entertaining tour that is sure to be the highlight of your day. *Bring a camera because amazing photos are guaranteed!*

Spice Plantation Tours

Get a taste of the rainforest!

Visit a 150 acre spice plantation and learn about some of your favorite flavors...including vanilla, cocoa, cinnamon, black and white pepper, and allspice, plus exotic fruits and essential oil plants.

The gardens provide a hands-on experience of how plants providing common flavors are grown and the processes to turn them into useable ingredients for chefs.

Tour epiphyte gardens, full of orchids, bromeliads and other exotic plants.

The plantation and all of its products are certified organic, so you can stock up on the finest in gourmet quality spices.

Reservations for half-day tours can be made through Hacienda Matapalo's Concierge Service.

Bird Watching Day Tours

With over 850 species of birds living in a relatively tight geographic area, Costa Rica offers Birders some of the most spectacular viewing opportunities on the planet with six distinct ontological regions and varied habitats ranging from coastal areas to cloud-covered mountain highlands.

Residents and Guests at Hacienda Matapalo can walk out onto their balcony or into the backyard to see the many *Toucans, Parrots, and Hummingbirds* that inhabit the property, but many top birding locations are close by and make wonderful daytrips. Head up into the *Talamanca Mountains* near San Isidro to spot beautiful Quetzals and hummingbirds that inhabit the cloud forests.

Just minutes from Hacienda Matapalo is the *Baru National Wildlife Refuge* which offers birding tours.

Experience the wonders found at Ballena National Park or Corcavado National Park on the Osa Peninsula.

Remember to bring you binoculars and a camera!

EXCITING Day tours

Ocean Kayaking

Kayaking off the beaches and through the mangroves is a popular activity along Costa Rica's lengthy coastline. It's a great way to get in touch with nature and it can be a good upper body workout too.

Get a group together, bring along a picnic lunch and some snorkeling gear and make a day of it. It's a great activity for the kids and is sure to keep them smiling.

Mangrove kayaking will give you the opportunity to see wildlife up close. You'll be gliding silently through the waters, accompanied by birdsong and the shouts of passing monkeys.

Details on kayaking locations will be available through Hacienda Matapalo's Concierge Services.

ATV Cross-Country Adventures

Get your motor running on an exciting ATV tour crisscrossing scenic mountaintops with incredible ocean views and scenic beaches!

Your journey starts out at the foot of the mountains where you will travel past quaint villages, palm and teak plantations, roaring mountain streams and primary rain forests with all the biodiversity imaginable. Then you will arrive at magnificent waterfalls where you can chill out and swim in crystal clear waters to enjoy nature at its finest. End your journey with a delicious Tico-style meal.

Experienced, bi-lingual guides are there to ensure your safety and a memorable time for all. There are a number of different tour routes available and most are half-day adventures. Hacienda Matapalo's Concierge Services can even arrange ATV tours for other popular areas in Costa Rica. Just let us know!

REALLY, REALLY Exciting Day Tours!

Waterfall Rappelling & Canyoning

If you're looking for a sedate afternoon tour, go back to the Butterfly page. However if you're looking for some extreme thrills, step right up...

Waterfall Rappelling and Canyoning is one of the most memorable and challenging experiences you can have

in the rainforest! This is your opportunity to see Costa Rica like the native wildlife.

Strap on a rock-climbing harness and use the latest in climbing equipment and fly across canopy zip lines, traverse hanging rope bridges, and rappel down the face of waterfalls and canyons under the watchful eye of experienced canyoning guides.

Guaranteed to be more fun than a barrel of monkeys and a heck of lot safer than wrestling a crocodile or jaguar.

Ultralight Tours

Get a birds-eye view of the rainforest or skim above the wave tops along the coastline from the seat of an ultralight aircraft. These flights are an absolute blast!

You can find ultralight flights leaving from the Quepos airport and Dominical. The major difference is that the Dominical flights are on an ultralight equipped with pontoons. Flights generally run about 30 minutes. The operators have a good safety record and you are guaranteed to come back with some great photos. Not recommended for the faint of heart. Adrenaline junkies should call the Concierge Service to setup a flight.

Golfing in Costa Rica

Yes, you can golf in Costa Rica.

Courses in proximity to Hacienda Matapalo are:

Los Suenos: 18-hole course outside of Jaco in Los Suenos Resort, about an hour north of Quepos. Completed and open to public.

Ramada Hotel Herradura Golf Resort: San Jose. Located between San Jose Airport and downtown.

Cariari Country Club: San Jose. 6,590 yards, designed by George Fazio. Long considered to be the best gold course in Central America.

Hacienda Pinilla: Ocean view 7,300 yard, par 72 course designed by Mike Young. Located way up in Guanacaste.

Currently there are not a lot of golf courses in the Central-Southern Pacific region, simply because there has been no previous demand for golf. Now that the area is opening to residential development the demand is coming and there are several golf courses under development in the region. Expect to see new courses at:

Cabo Caletas: 18-hole course 35 minutes north of Quepos in the town of Esterillos. Golf course expected to open in 2010.

Del Pacifico: 18-hole planned course in Esterillos, should be opening in 3-4 years.

San Buenas: 18-hole course a little over 30km south of Dominical, expected to be opened for 9-hole golf mid 2010, with the entire 18 holes open in 2011.

Quepos: Rumored new course that should be a hit with the yachting crowd at the new Marina Pez Vela.

Matapalo: Okay, there's no golf course in Matapalo, yet. Just head to the beach at low tide and you'll get to use a 26-mile long driving range for *free*.

National Parks near Hacienda Matapalo

What do you want to do today? Consider taking a day trip or weekend excursion to one of the many National Parks and Nature Preserves located within easy travel distance of Hacienda Matapalo. Whether traveling as a group or going solo, your ticket to the wonders of Costa Rica are just a phone call or e-mail away with the assistance of Hacienda Matapalo's Concierge Services. We can provide recommendations on attractions and make the arrangements to get you there and back hassle-free.

What is there to see and do? Start with Costa Rica's National Parks. The National Conservation Areas System protects more than 186 areas, including 32

national parks, 8 biological reserves, 13 forest reserves, and 51 wildlife refuges. Costa Rica has managed to protect a larger proportion of its land than any other country in the world. How much of Costa Rica has been set aside for conservation? Roughly 25% of the country, that's over 3.2 million acres.

Four of Costa Rica top ecological parks are just a few minutes drive from Hacienda Matapalo:

Manuel Antonio National Park

With 1,680 acres, Manuel Antonio National Park is small compared to other national parks, but it epitomizes everything tourists flock to Costa Rica to see: stunning beaches, a magnificent setting with islands offshore (bird sanctuaries for marine species), lush rainforest laced with a network of welcoming trails, wildlife galore, and all within a few minutes of Hacienda Matapalo. You are guaranteed close-up encounters with monkeys, sloths, coatis, and macaws. Three secluded beaches inside the park provide placid waters for the kids to swim in and there are always plenty of hermit crabs and sunning iguanas to photograph.

The park is open 6 days a week, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Closed on Mondays. Tours can be scheduled by Hacienda Matapalo Concierge Services.

Hacienda Baru National Wildlife Refuge

Located just a few kilometers south of Hacienda Matapalo, this unique preserve stretches from pristine beaches to mountain ridges to the east. Hacienda Barú's 330 hectares (815 acres) was declared a National Wildlife Refuge in 1995 by the then president of Costa Rica, Jose Figueres. Until the mid-80's much of the land was used for farming, but new owners started replanting the cleared areas with trees and allowed the forests to grow back.

Now part of the "*Path of the Tapir Biological Corridor*", Hacienda Barú's wild expanses serve a greater purpose as a natural habitat for Costa Rica's wildlife. Animals that had long abandoned the area have now returned and are flourishing. Monkeys now roam freely across the property and sloths have finally returned to lowland areas after nearly 40 years of absence.

Since Baru is a *national wildlife refuge* and not a national park, you will find more tourist oriented activities here such as canopy zipline tours, overnight camping expeditions, and bird watching tours.

Ballena National Marine Park

A great spot for diving and snorkeling is only 20 minutes south of Hacienda Matapalo. Ballena National Marine Park is named for the humpback whales that can be seen offshore here during their annual migration each year. Created in 1989, it was the first national marine park in Costa Rica and covers 270 acres on land and another 13,000 acres of maritime area. The location is notable for a scenic spit of land called the “whale’s tail” that juts into the Pacific, plus it boasts the largest coral reef on the Pacific Coast of Central America.

Along with seasonal visits by whales you can frequently see dolphins and sea turtles, plus marine iguanas can be spotted sunning themselves on the beaches and rocks.

Not familiar with diving? Get your feet wet with SCUBA training from PADI certified instructors. Dive courses will be just one of of the many activities available for residents and guests.

Corcovado National Park

Without a doubt, the crown jewel of Costa Rica’s National Parks. Located on the Southern Pacific Coast amid the sprawling Osa Peninsula, Parque Nacional Corcovado--*the Amazon of Costa Rica*--is the largest stronghold of primary forest on the Pacific from Mexico to South America. Its 103,000+ acres

encompass eight habitats, from mangrove swamp and jolillo palm grove to montane forest. The park protects more than 400 species of birds (20 are endemic), 116 of amphibians and reptiles, and 139 of mammals. Its healthy population of scarlet macaws (about 1,200 birds) is the largest concentration in Central America. National Geographic has gone so far as to call this area the most bio-diverse place on the planet.

Corcavado's size and multitude of habitats makes it an ideal location for weekend trips. Explore another world and stay at one of the eco-lodges in the area. Hacienda Matapalo Concierge Services will be there to make arrangements for you.

Chirripo National Park

Take an inland tour and visit the cool mountain highlands near the beautiful town of San Isidro. Mt. Chirripo is the highest point in Central America at just over 12,400 ft., and Chirripó Parque Nacional protects the 123,000 acres of high-elevation terrain surrounding it. The park is contiguous with La Amistad International Peace Park to the south; together they form the Amistad-Talamanca Regional Conservation Unit.

Cloud forest, above 8,100 feet, covers almost half the park. Mt. Chirripó lures the intrepid who seek the satisfaction of reaching the summit. Many Ticos choose to hike the mountain during the week proceeding Easter, when the weather is usually dry. The full hike to the top requires an overnight stay on the mountain (lodging is available), however technical expertise isn't required and the trails are well marked.

Concierge Services can arrange your tour, providing guides, accommodations, and transportation.

What To Do?

Try an overnight tour.

Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

Straddling the Continental Divide at 4662 ft, the *Monteverde Cloud Forest* offers one of the most interesting places to visit in Costa Rica and is acclaimed as one of the most outstanding wildlife refuges in the New World Tropics.

The Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve is a private non-profit reserve and because of its altitude, the clouds go through the forest. The canopy is extremely rich with birds, insects, butterflies, and thousands of plants.

Travel across cable suspension footbridges high above the forest floor and get the birds-eye view of life in the rainforest as the cool, misty air rolls past.

Tours, transportation and overnight lodging can be arranged by Concierge Services.

Mt. Arenal and La Fortuna Hot Springs

Looking for something out of the ordinary?

Visit Mt. Arenal, the most active volcano in Costa Rica. Hike the surrounding national park and then retire to your hotel and enjoy views of the lavaflows while you have dinner.

After a day of hiking the trails surrounding Mt. Arenal you'll want to pay a visit to the nearby town of *La Fortuna*, famed for its hot springs.

You can visit either *Baldi Hot Springs* or the renowned *Tabacon Resort & Spa* for a relaxing dip in the naturally heated mineral water pools. Spending a day soaking in the hot mineral waters, surrounded by lushly landscaped rainforest beauty and the cool mountain air makes for a great day of relaxation for both families and honeymooners.

Highly recommended for one and two night tours. Hacienda Matapalo will handle all of your travel arrangements.

Cave Exploration in Costa Rica

Calling all Spelunkers

Visitors should not be surprised that Costa Rica, one of the most biologically diverse places on the planet, is also home to some of the best spelunking in the Americas. The country's wide range of adventures is not limited to the surface of the Earth. Beneath are hidden caves where stalactites hang down, holding tightly to the ceiling.

Stalagmites cling to the floor, pointing upward, some even reaching the roofs of these massive cathedrals. Columns form when stalactites and stalagmites join, adding to the feel and ambiance of a tranquil house of worship. Such underground caverns and their magnificent calcium formations are the hidden beauty beneath Costa Rica.

Two of the top locations for cave exploration are Barra Honda National Park which offers incredible tours, and the amazing Venado Caves. Both feature wonderful limestone rocks, stalactites, stalagmites, and corals. Whimsical stone formations are shaped by the forces of an underground river.

The caves first formed during the Miocene Period, about 15 to 20 million years ago. After their formation, the caves remained below sea level for an extended period of time before tectonic movements brought them to the surface. At this time, the

Guatuzos aborigines became the first people to stumble upon this discovery.

Set aside a weekend or overnight stay for these locations and make reservations a few days in advance for Barra Honda's caves.

Costa Rica Fishing

Costa Rica is an angler's dream come true. The country's Pacific ports and beach resorts provide access to some the best deep sea fishing in the world, while the canals and rivers of the northern Atlantic coast feature world-class snook and tarpon fishing.

The Pacific provides Costa Rica's most consistently exciting fishing, with sailfish, marlin, tuna, wahoo, roosterfish, mackerel, mahi mahi and snapper being caught regularly. It is the abundance of billfish that has made that area famous, with sailfish and marlin strikes being recorded in phenomenal numbers. It's common to release a dozen or more sails and even a marlin or two in a single day, and not unusual to release more than 30 sailfish a day. Today *catch and release* is standard practice for those hooking the massive billfish, but catching a Red Snapper, Mahi Mahi, or Mackerel for dinner is perfectly acceptable.

Quepos is a center of fishing on the central coast and a major claim to fame is the incredible calmness of the offshore waters. Currently, avid anglers can take advantage of the unbelievable flat water sport fishing experience 365 days-a-year. The secret to flat water in Quepos is found in physics. Like Hawaii, the winds are easterly, opposite from the prevailing weather on the U.S. West Coast. An 11,000-foot mountain range hugs the coast and shelters the ocean from the wind. With little to no wind to create stomach-churning seas, sport fishing is absolute pura vida (pure life), as they say in Costa Rica.

Billfish are the target of most visiting anglers, and they are seldom disappointed from around December through April. From most areas, it's no more than 12 to 20 miles run to the blue water where most of the billfish action is encountered.

Charter boats are usually readily available and most captains are willing to negotiate the rates for half-day and full day charters. Some boats out of Quepos offer multi-day trips to Drake Bay and the Caño Island area, overnighing at one of the several lodges centered around Drake Bay. This region is best known for its wahoo, big cubera and roosterfish, but there are also tuna, dorado, sails and some marlin.

THE FISH

PACIFIC BLUE MARLIN

Most believe Blue Marlin are the most sought after of all the ocean sport fish. A super strong and powerful billfish, blue marlin will fight hard and run fast for many hours on end, especially when you are hooked up to a very large marlin. They can suddenly dive to deep water and can make wild jumps like some type of fish acrobatic. With impressive endurance, it is not uncommon to see a hooked fish make up to 40 or more spectacular jumps. This fish can be a touch test of an angler's deep sea fishing skills.

Blue marlin can be found in tropical and warm temperate waters around the globe, mostly in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. It is the most tropical of the billfish and is often found in waters near the equator. In eastern Pacific waters, they can be found in an area generally from southern California along the coast of Mexico to Peru in South America.

Blue marlin feed primarily near the surface, though they occasionally dive to deeper water to feed, depending on where their prey is found. Their diet consists mostly of fish and other sea life found near the surface and is highly dependent upon location. This diet can include tuna, mackerel, squid, octopus

and any number of fish species indigenous to the environment.

Season: October is normally the top month for marlin in this area, but action is also good in September and November and occasional blues and rare black are likely to be found any time of year although they are usually out further than the boats hunting for sailfish are likely to be fishing.

PACIFIC SAILFISH (pez vela)

Unsurpassed in its size range for combined strength and spectacle, Pacific sailfish are prized for the challenge of the catch, their penchant for dramatic leaps out of the water and their stunning beauty. Due to declining numbers resulting from overfishing, most sailfish are now caught and released.

Sailfish can be found in tropical and warm temperate waters throughout the world, mostly in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. They are very plentiful off the Costa Rica coast and Panama coast. In eastern Pacific waters, they can be found in an area generally running from southern California along the coast of Mexico to Peru in South America.

Sailfish feed primarily near the surface, though they occasionally dive to deeper water to feed, depending on where their prey is found. Their diet consists

mostly of fish and other sea life found near the surface and is highly dependent upon location.

Like the other billfish, the Sailfish is considered an ocean species, but generally can be found closer to land than the rest, seeming to prefer areas where coral reefs and/or freshwater runoffs mingle with ocean water. At times the Sailfish comes right into the surf and quite a few have been caught over the years from beaches and piers.

Season: Middle of December to the end of April when they begin moving north is rated the best season, but the big schools often move in about October and occasionally stay longer. A few sail always show among the catch from June through September, mixed with the other species that are found inshore during those months.

YELLOWFIN TUNA

Yellow fin tuna are considered an excellent food and sport fish and are highly sought after by anglers and commercial fishermen alike. After hitting a lure or bait, they often go deep and will fight with great power and tenacity. Yellow fin tuna are found worldwide in tropical and some subtropical waters. These bodies of water include all three warm oceans Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans and all warm seas except the Mediterranean.

Though they can withstand cooler water, yellow fin tuna prefer warm water and are found mainly in waters between 62 and 80 F. Young fish usually school below the surface but over deep water, often several hundred feet. They avoid depths because of their intolerance for low concentrations of oxygen.

Season: Found through the year as they are all along the Pacific coast, but most abundant from June through September. Most are the eight to 12 pounders, but a dozen pounders and maybe another two dozen in the 100 to 200 pound range are taken every year.

WAHOO

Wahoo are present in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans in clear, tropical and subtropical waters. Heavy seasonal concentrations occur off the Pacific coasts of Panama, Costa Rica and Baja California in the summer.

They may strike a surface bait in spectacular, greyhounding fashion, but seldom jump after being hooked. Wild fight is characterized by several sizzling runs, usually at or near the surface. One of the fastest of all game fish.

While the wahoo is perfectly capable of biting chunks out of large fish, it primarily feeds on whole small fishes, such as sardines, scads, mackerel and squid.

They are frequently solitary feeders, but they may sometimes be found in small, loose groups. Wahoo are sub-surface hunters that hang several feet below the surface and shoot up to attack prey with tremendous speed. Although they feed at all times, they tend to be more active in the morning and evening hours.

They roam the deep blue water, but anglers can find them by working drop-offs, seamounts, weed lines and other favorable feeding locations.

Season: More abundant in the late summer especially around the Drake Bay and Caño's Island area from late June to early August.

DOLPHIN (Mahi Mahi, Dolphinfish, Dorado)

The dolphin is considered one of the top offshore game fish and is highly targeted by anglers around the world. It is famous for its leaps and flips over the surface when hooked. Because of their speed and agility, dolphins provide for an exciting catch as they run long and jump often.

Dolphins are a warm-water fish usually found in deep waters, close to the surface. While sometimes found in coastal waters, they often concentrate in the open ocean around floating objects such as buoys,

driftwood and seaweed clusters. They are considered to be the most surface-oriented of all big-game fish. While the greatest concentrations of dolphin are believed to be in the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific, they are found worldwide in tropical and subtropical waters and warm water currents and all offshore waters of Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean.

Dolphin are known as voracious predators. While their favorite prey is the flying fish, they also consume squid, shrimp, crustaceans and even smaller dolphin. Using a keen sense of eyesight the dolphin locates most food near clumps of floating vegetation and objects.

Season: Best action begins with the winter rains that start in late May and wash debris from the river mouths lines that the dolphin favor

ROOSTERFISH (Pez Gallo, Papagallo)

If you land a Roosterfish, identifying it should be no problem - the dorsal fin is very elongated and supposedly has a likeness to a rooster's comb. It has a gray back and silver body with two pronounced diagonal stripes. The pectoral fin is long and sickle shaped and the tail fin is deeply forked as is typical of all members of the jack family.

Range—Fishing for this hard-hitting inshore species is incredible, with the best spots off the river mouths and the rocky drop-offs. Favored spots near Quepos are the mouth of the Parrita River; Palo Seco between Parrita and Damas just outside Damas; off the mouth of the Naranjo River; around the points at Dominical and throughout the Drake Bay and Caño's Island area.

An angler will see the roosterfish come up on and boil on the trolled bait. They will typically circle and whack at the offering before actually crashing on it. A furious fighter with unequalled stamina, unpredictable slashing moves, jumps and long screaming runs.

Season: Best fishing is from June through early September

SNAPPER

Sport Fishing for snapper in Costa Rica is a wonderful experience. There is a probability of fishing a snapper around every corner of the country from north to south, Pacific and Atlantic.

As most novice and advanced anglers know there are many varieties of snapper out in the ocean. Costa Rica is host to more than 50, most of which can be fished on foot from the beach or near mangrove and river mouths. Inshore trolling and deep sea jigging

are other very successful ways for snapper fishing in Costa Rica.

These toothed monsters are restless hunters and fiercely territorial, and that's why almost any lure or bait passed near their caves and hideouts fall victim to their immense jaws and pointy teeth.

Snapper is also top predator around inland mangrove estuaries and river canals in the central and south Pacific. Sierpe and Terraba are known for the mighty snapper fished closed to the mangrove line, good eats with a beer and a dish of *patacones* at the end of a hard day.

SNOOK (Robalo)

Snook is a prized game fish in Costa Rica for a couple of reasons. One, they are an intelligent fish and there is a knack to fooling them into taking a bait. Two, when they hit the frying pan; they are a real treat to the taste buds. Snook in Costa Rica move freely in and out of salt and fresh waters, making the angling possibilities for them almost endless.

Snook are caught in the rivers and river mouths on the Pacific and Caribbean Coast. Snook are also caught in some of the rivers, lakes and lagoons along the Costa Rica / Nicaragua border. The current World Record Snook was caught on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica and the old record was caught just south

of Quepos. There are lots of really big Snook caught every year in Costa Rica.

The IGFA world record Pacific black snook was taken in the month of July at the mouth of the Rio Naranjo on a boat trolling just outside the breaker line. This is a relatively new target for some small charter boats, but the best months seem to be from July through November during the heavy rainy season.

Season: Year round

SPANISH MACKEREL

The Mackerel in Costa Rica is common around inshore waters rock outcropping, and surf fishing. These toothy predators travel in schools of various sizes (the bigger the mackerel the lesser number of individuals in each school). They can be found in both Pacific and Atlantic coasts, but only in the Caribbean side can you go sport fishing for King Mackerel.

The best places to go fishing for mackerel in Costa Rica usually involve some kind of structure, mostly reef outcroppings and small inshore islands. The Murcielago islands in the north pacific, many inshore reef outcroppings along the central pacific, and what has become known to local anglers as “Mackerel Island” in the South Pacific are sure starting points to find these predators. Mackerel fishing is not for the

light hearted. These fast sport fishing predators attack lures and bait quickly and pull line fast.

Younger fish collect in huge schools of like size and age while older fish are most often loners. When schools of baitfish are in the shallows, Spanish mackerel will herd them into position for a feeding frenzy. Predatory birds often join in the action thus marking the spot for observant fly anglers. Surface flies can be very effective and once hooked, they are famous for their speed and overall fighting ability.

Season: Year round

Marina Pez Vela in Quepos

Located just a short drive from Hacienda Matapalo is the site of the new Marina Pez Vela. Situated in Quepos harbor, it will be home port to the best flat water sport fishing in the world.

The new five star marina resort covers over 55 acres and will be the largest in Costa Rica with 305 wet slips, capable of accommodating boats from 35 to over 200 feet, plus dry rack storage for 120 boats of up to 35 feet will be available. For boaters passing through the region, calm water refueling docks will be a welcomed feature.

Construction is advancing at a rapid pace with jetties and seawalls nearing completion which will soon be followed by floating dock construction in mid-2009.

What is truly significant about Marina Pez Vela is that it will be the only true full service boatyard for nearly 1,000 miles of coastline. When complete, the 4-acre yard will have hauling capacities up to 130' and will be served by both 75-ton and 200-ton Marine Travel lifts. Plans call for covered out-of-water sheds to house up to three boats with 45' high roof lines. The yard will have all the amenities you would expect for a proper yard in the States or elsewhere. There will be fully staffed workshops, storage sheds, fully paved grounds and ample power, plus air and water utilities.

In addition, the marina is expected to receive full authorization to be a trade-free zone, resulting in a duty-free parts center and purchasing department with the ability to have on-site Customs' clearance for products, thereby streamlining the delivery of parts coming from the US or other parts of the world.

Marina Pez Vela will also house up to 150,000 square feet of retail services for yachting and boating guests including bait and tackle, deli, ice, marine parts and supplies. Landlubbers will enjoy numerous on-site restaurants, gift stores, boutiques and galleries.

The Central Pacific zone will reap huge benefits from the new marina with more money flowing into the local economies, more stores and restaurants, more jobs, and the revitalization of Quepos Centro are just some of the immediate results.

Hacienda Matapalo's close proximity and rental program will allow visiting fishermen and yachtsmen the opportunity to experience a unique rainforest and beach setting while avoiding the congestion of Manuel Antonio.

Visit www.marinapezvela.com for more information

Pedro's Restaurant Guide

For the majority of tourists that visit our country, Manuel Antonio National Park is more than just an obligatory stop; it attracts a great variety of visitors from all over the world to admire its beauty, or simply as the locals say, "spend a hard day at the office."

To enjoy the national park is an unforgettable experience; to be surrounded by nature and observe the great variety of flora and fauna. It makes us realize how incredible it would be to have a piece of paradise of one's own and pass the rest of one's days in the peace and serenity of such a natural sanctuary.

However, one cannot fully enjoy the plentitude of beauty on an empty stomach, so I will share some tips of where to enjoy a delicious meal when visiting Manuel Antonio and the surrounding areas.

MANUEL ANTONIO

Dos Cocos El Meson – Manuel Antonio

You don't have to go too far if you are already enjoying the warm sands of Manuel Antonio beach to enjoy the best lunch around.

Restaurant Dos Cocos El Meson has mixed up the best of home style Costa Rican cooking with world wide favorites on a varied menu. They have created the perfect atmosphere to enjoy your stay at the beach even more.

It is not difficult to imagine how this restaurant has managed to maintain the quality and friendliness of service without falling into boring routine like many other places, since the pride of the staff in their `tico-ness` is reflected in their smiles.

Restaurante Barba Roja – Manuel Antonio

Barba Roja is absolutely the best spot in town to watch the beautiful Manuel Antonio sunsets. Here, South Beach chic combines with a tranquil zen-like ambiance to gaze over amazing forever views of the Pacific.

Being one of the first businesses established in Manuel Antonio in the 1970's, Barba Roja has maintained its status as one of the top local restaurants both in terms of service and quality of food. The sophisticated international cooking will surprise even the most refined of culinary palates, Its ample menu features everything from French cooking to the exotic eastern flavors of the sushi bar. Don't forget the great snacks to accompany happy hour drinks on the sundeck from where you can watch the blazing sunset and say good bye to another hard day at the office.

La Hacienda – Manuel Antonio

Situated right next to Plaza Yara on the main road in Manuel Antonio, La Hacienda beckons you to its covered garden terrace and jungle vista, which is pleasantly illuminated at night. The menu is fusion cuisine at its finest, playing with Mediterranean, Latin American, and Asian flavors paired with an extensive and unique wine list. A full bar features a tropical martini menu. Freshly ground coffee is served in the traditional Costa Rican chorreador, the freshest way to have a cup of coffee and finish up a great meal.

Ronnie's Place "Mi Lugar" – Manuel Antonio

"Mi Lugar" is off the beaten path. More accurately, you'll drive down nearly a half-mile of some of the bumpiest roads around to get here. What you'll find at the end is a quaint open-air establishment perched

on a ridgeline offering magnificent sunset ocean views and fantastic food. This is one of our favorite places to share a Pina Colada served in a hollowed out pineapple or maybe a pitcher of Margarita's and some authentic Ceviche with chips. Ronnie, the owner has been a famous chef locally for years and when he finally opened his own restaurant he named it "Mi Lugar" (My Place). But all anyone could talk about was "Ronnie's new place" and so it became known as just "Ronnie's Place".

Kapi Kapi – Manuel Antonio

In the language of the Maleku Indians of Costa Rica, "Kapi Kapi" means welcome.

Located in Manuel Antonio, Restaurante Kapi Kapi is a tranquil respite where incredible food and outstanding service are the norm. Chef Darren Remy has created a menu that will indeed entice your palate! With the assistance of his well qualified staff, he prepares an inspired international cuisine influenced by the flavors of Costa Rica and Thailand. The menu is filled with seafood, pork, chicken, vegetarian and beef options. An excellent location for quiet romantic dinners. Reservations suggested.

Restaurante El Avión– Manuel Antonio

El Avion is a fun experience for the whole family. This unique restaurant offers you a little bit of Central American history along with a tropical dining

experience. Built around an actual Fairchild C-123 cargo plane that was part of the “Iran-Contra Affair” arms sale scandal of the mid-80’s, you can have a drink in the cockpit bar or enjoy your dinner overlooking the ocean.

While its sister plane was shot down over Nicaragua and ignited a firestorm of controversy, El Avion’s C-123 spent a number of years languishing at San Jose’s airport before it was purchased and shipped to Manuel Antonio by ferry boat. Now the aircraft serves less risqué endeavors and is a local landmark. They offer a wonderful variety of food… everything from All American to Oriental Fried Rice. It’s sure to please every member of your family.

Bambu Jam Bar & Restaurant – Manuel Antonio

One of the hottest hangouts in Manuel Antonio for both locals and tourists alike, Bambu Jam is sure to deliver a rollicking good time. Choose from an ever-changing chalkboard menu of interesting appetizers and tasty main dishes including fresh fish, shrimp rack of lamb, pork tenderloin, and featuring a homemade dessert menu. Live Music every Monday, Tuesday and Friday featuring some of the best bands in the country playing a selection of salsa and Latin pop.

La Cantina – Manuel Antonio

La Cantina Restaurant, located across the street from Hotel Costa Verde has an open pit grill serving possibly the best steak in Manuel Antonio. Anything off the grill is super tasty (try the shish-kebob) and the ambience is only improved with the live music. Great open air ambience and funky décor built around an old railroad car.

Mar Luna – Manuel Antonio

Located just past the steep hill & before the soccer field (this is Costa Rica and those are the directions, sorry...) Open air dining, fantastic views, and a great menu. You'll come back for more.

Luna at Hotel Gaia – Manuel Antonio

Breakfast at Gaia's Luna Restaurant is simply over the top. A 5-Star experience starts from the moment you are whisked up to the hotel by golf cart and continues throughout your stay. Luna's commanding mountaintop views and open air dining make dining here truly memorable. Try the Breakfast Buffet which includes a mouthwatering array of fresh pastries. Are you partial to Osetra caviar with a side of scrambled eggs? Tell the attentive staff what you're looking for and they'll make every effort to accommodate you. Be sure to make a reservation at Gaia's Terra Spa for a post-breakfast massage and pedicure.

Byblos Pizzeria– Manuel Antonio

The best made-from-scratch, Italian-style pizza in Manuel Antonio can be found on the grounds of Byblos Hotel & Casino in the poolside bistro. Your choice of toppings and delivery is available too.

QUEPOS

Restaurante El Gran Escape – Quepos

Facing the Quepos shoreline is one of the most well known restaurants around. The building housing El Gran Escape has gone through many changes since it was first built in the 1950's. The structure is known as an historical site for the town of Quepos. Its prior lives include that of a Brothel and also the former location of the Cervecería or Beer Distributor, and then finally becoming El Gran Escape!

Cafe Milagro – Quepos & Manuel Antonio

Coffee is the star attraction at Cafe Milagro. The Quepos location has a coffee roaster and you can load up on bags of fresh premium blend ground and whole bean coffees. Next door is the Milagro Cafe serving breakfast and lunch. The Manuel Antonio location offers breakfast, lunch, and snacks.

El Jardin del Mar – Quepos

If you want to try some authentic Costa Rican cuisine, El Jardin in Quepos is where savory home-style cooking and reasonable prices are always the special

of the day. Order a hearty casado, the typical plate which offers a choice of beef, chicken, pork chops or fish, and comes with rice and beans, vegetable of the day, salad, and fried plantains. Other good selections are Arroz con Pollo, and black bean soup. All go well with a natural fruit smoothie. Located just around the corner from the Hacienda Matapalo office.

L'Angolo Gastronomia – Quepos

An Italian deli in Costa Rica? Absolutely! They make their own prosciutto and mozzarella. Two tables are available, specialties are ala minute pasta dishes and delicious sandwiches.

Dos Locos Mexican – Quepos

Reaching the nearest Taco Bell requires a three hour drive, but if you're looking for Mexican then Dos Locos is the place in Quepos. Start with the nachos and try a filling burrito or quesadilla with your choice of steak or chicken, washed down with a cold Imperial beer. Live music on Saturday afternoon is provided by a group of retired expats who still love rock and roll.

Restaurante Quepoa – Quepos

It's 11 p.m. and you've got the munchies?

Head over to Quepoa, open 24 hours in Quepos Centro, across from the bus station. Everything

from delicious Tico cooking or to Pizza by the slice. Grab a beer at the bar or stop in for karaoke nights.

Mira Olas, Best Western Hotel – Quepos

Overlooking Quepos harbor and the malecon (beach road) from the third floor of the Best Western Kamuk Hotel, the Mira Olas Restaurant gives diners a shady location with balmy ocean breezes. Lunch menus are reasonably priced and sunset dinners are quite tasty.

Chicken Bros. – Quepos

Just about anyone can appreciate a good piece of fried chicken and if the crowds at Chicken Bros. are any indication, Costa Ricans love it too. This place is the hands-down winner for serving the best fried chicken in town, and possibly the best roasted chicken also. Try an order of the refried red bean dip with some crispy-fresh nachos. Eat-in or take-out, large orders for parties or picnics welcomed.

Café Mediterraneo – Quepos

Italian-style Gelato is made fresh on premises with unique tropical flavors that reflect Costa Rica's bountiful harvest. Try a cone or cup of smooth and frosty coconut, pistachio, lemon, watermelon, papaya, or watermelon gelato. A sinfully rich Chocolate-Orange is just to-die-for, so order a double scoop for maximum endorphin rush.

Café Mediterraneo also offers a nice menu for savory risotto and pasta dishes which incorporate high quality cheeses and seasonings. Located upstairs from the Hacienda Matapalo office in Centro Comercial La Garza.

DOMINICAL

La Parcela – Dominical

There is just something magical about La Parcela. Set on a small point jutting into the Pacific, it has dramatic ocean views on two sides with the Osa Peninsula to the south and Bahia Dominicalito to the north. Just a few kilometers south of Dominical, La Parcela delivers delicious meals accompanied by the sounds of rolling surf and ocean breezes rustling through the bamboo overhead. The service comes at a leisurely pace which will give you adequate time to soak up Costa Rica's natural beauty, plus a couple of margaritas. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Maracatu – Dominical

Here's your spot for some really, really good organic and fish dishes, plus vegetarian meals served up with ethnically diverse flavors.

After sundown enjoy some lively nightlife set to a world music vibe.

Confusione – Dominical

Don't let the name mislead you... the chef at Confusione knows exactly what he's doing, delivering consistently excellent Italian food. Located in Hotel Domilocos.

Roca Verde–Dominical

A minute south of Dominical and located steps from the beach. The restaurant serves pretty good food, but the big attraction is the Saturday night party. Live music under a large open pavilion makes Roca Verde a hotspot on weekends. The adjacent Roca Verde Hotel has six comfortable rooms decorated in a whimsical tropical theme.

MATAPALO AND ENVIRONS

Chasa – Matapalo

They don't take American Express or any other credit card at Chasa, but prices are easy on the wallet and you'll be glad you stopped.

Try a hearty plate of Gallo Pinto or Huevos Rancheros for breakfast or order a casado for lunch. Honest home style Tico cooking will keep you coming back for more.

Located in Matapalo Centro, just north of the little bridge, east of the soccer field.

Bahari Beach – Matapalo

Idyllic Matapalo Beach is the backdrop for Bahari Beach Bungalows and Restaurant. With only four tables you can be assured of personalized service from the owners.

Bahari Hotel consists of four oversized safari tents that are luxury equipped. This unique establishment has been written up in Travel & Leisure Magazine. Call ahead for a table.

Albergue Suiza – Matapalo

Swiss owners make Albergue Suiza stand out with a gourmet international menu. The restaurant and associated hotel regularly attracts a European clientele looking to sun on Matapalo's fabulous beachfront.

Express del Pacifico – Matapalo

A French/Canadian owned restaurant and full service bar, featuring both international cuisine, as well as authentic and very tasty tipico meals.

Soda Eva – Matapalo

This is a real deal, roadside Soda. It's just Eva in the open kitchen, but she can cook. Order a Casado con chuleta, Pork chops (chuleta) with arroz blanco, beans, maduro (sweet plantains), and ensalada. You'll leave full and happy. On the Costanera highway just north of Matapalo, west side.

Bar Leche Agria – Passito

Halfway between Quepos and Matapalo, along the Costanera highway, is the small village of Passito. Bar Leche Agria (bitter milk) serves up tasty sopa mariscos (seafood soup), casados, cold beer, and something called a Tortuga Shooter, which is purported to have aphrodisiac qualities. Spend Saturday night with the campesinos and dance to the sounds of Latin Pop and Cumbia. A good time is guaranteed.

Now you have some idea of the best places to enjoy a meal in Manuel Antonio, Quepos, Matapalo, and Dominical, but remember that in this area there really is something for everyone and each experience will be an unforgettable one. *Bon Provecho!*

Nightlife

Manuel Antonio

Beach Monkey–Happening Place. Got Reggae?

Bambu Jam– Live music

Byblos– Monday Night is Ladies Night, Oh what a sight..

Tutu Bar– Roof top terrace bar/disco above Gato Negro, across from El Avion. GLBT

Quepos

Disco Arco Iris (the Disco)- Latin Pop, rock, salsa, 70's disco, and anything else you can shake your bootie to. Gets going about 11 p.m. open til 4 a.m.

Pescador's- A fine drinking establishment that offers talent nights.

Wacky Wanda's- Advertised as "The only air-conditioned bar in Quepos," but we know of at least two others with A/C. Next to Pescador's

Casino (Kamuk Hotel)- It's a casino, but a lot smaller than anything you've seen in Vegas.

Club Playita- Bar, pool tables, swimming pool, opens mid-day. G, solo hombres

Bar Ranchera - Tico bar playing latin country & salsa. Kareoke every night.

Londres

Bar Robin Hood- In the boonies east of Quepos. Usually has a couple of big parties each month.

Matapalo Area

Bar Leche Agria-(Passito) Costanera highway north of Matapalo. Tico Bar and restaurant. Playing latin sounds. Great place to grab a beer or down some shots.

Dominical

Pretty much ANYWHERE in Dominical you'll find a party starting. Head toward the music or make your own.

Roca Verde- Saturday nights are packed with live music and dancing.

Getting Around Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a relatively small country and the mountainous terrain can make finding a straight path from Point A to Point B quite a challenge. Your vacation time is precious so make the most of it by using experienced airlines and bus shuttle services.

Sansa Regional Airlines (www.flysansa.com)

Sansa flies from San Jose Int'l airport to 15 destinations in Costa Rica, including Quepos.

Sansa's terminal at San Jose airport is 60 yards west of the main terminal. Flight time to Quepos is 20 minutes.

NatureAir (www.natureair.com)

The world's first carbon neutral airline!

NatureAir flies to 17 destinations in Costa Rica plus Bocas del Toro in Panama. Flies out of San Jose's Pavas Regional airport but a flight to Quepos is still only 20 minutes.

Interbus (www.interbusonline.com)

Mini-van shuttle service. Dependable and economical choice for airport transfers or traveling to popular destinations across Costa Rica.

CAR RENTALS

Like renting a car anywhere else, go shopping online for best rates or give their offices a call.

Here are some popular choices:

Alamo Rent-a-Car in Costa Rica:

www.alamocostarica.com

tel. intl code+ (506) 2242-7733

Budget Car Rental in Costa Rica

www.budget.co.cr

tel. intl code+ (506) 2436-2000

Thrifty Car Rental / Costa Rica

Google “Thifty Car rental, Costa Rica”

Adobe Car Rental/Costa Rica

www.adobecarcr.com

tel. into code + (506) 2258-4242.

Points of Interest and Regional Events to Visit

Your Neighbors in San Isidro

One of the lesser known benefits of Hacienda Matapalo’s location is the ease of visiting the town of

San Isidro de El General, just “up the mountain” from Dominical.

A prosperous agricultural area, San Isidro is a key transportation and farming center in Rio General Valley, and is the largest town in this region. Situated on the Pan-American Highway and surrounded by the Talamanca Mountains, it's a great stopping point for tourists visiting Chirripo National Park (home of the highest peak in Costa Rica).

You can find all of the of goods and services that one would expect for a city with a population of 50,000, including the Hospital Clinica Labrador (www.hospitallabrador.com), and a charming and expansive central plaza with views of the surrounding mountain range.

The beginning of February is when the annual cattle show and fair takes place. Take in the rodeo, horse parade, carnival rides, and good eats.

Every Thursday you can find the local Farmers Market.

Dominical

Just a few minutes south of Hacienda Matapalo you will find the ‘surf town’ of Dominical with its relaxed atmosphere and funky vibe. Its major claim to fame is the consistently large waves that attract surfers from all over the world. Cross the Rio Baru bridge and then hang a right to enter the downtown area that parallels the beach.

Because the road through Dominical had been paved years earlier, development started sooner and real estate prices are considerably steeper than in Matapalo. *The good news is that reasonably priced restaurants abound and the nightlife is happening every night.*

Quepos

Farmers Market

Where: Quepos Centro, behind the bus station

When: Late Friday afternoon & Saturday mornings.

Get the best of farm fresh produce when local farmers make their weekly visit to Quepos. Everything takes place in Quepos Centro, in the vacant lot behind the bus station. It gets started on

Friday afternoons after 5 p.m. and on Saturday mornings from 6 a.m. until about 2 in the afternoon.

In addition to a wide selection of vegetables and tropical fruits, you can find fresh squeezed orange juice and sugar cane juice, fresh baked goods, local cheeses, fresh poultry and seafood.

San Jose and the Central Valley

Museo de Oro (Gold Museum)

One of the largest collections of Pre-Columbian gold artifacts in the world. Over 1,000 pieces on exhibition that date from 300 to 1500 A.C. Located in San Jose Centro.

Teatro Nacional (National Theater)

Constructed between 1891 and 1897 the National Theater offers lavish architectural detail from an age past. Open for tours and cultural events. San Jose Centro (downtown) on Avenida 2.

Cafe Britt Coffee Tour

Costa Rica produces some of the highest quality coffee in the world and the Cafe Britt Coffee Tour is an excellent way to learn about its history and culture. The Café Britt Coffee Tour is located in the village of Barva in Heredia, Costa Rica. Visit the Cafe Britt website (www.cafebritt.com) for details and directions. Highly recommended!

Sarchi (the Ox Cart Town)

Located in the hills north of San Jose, Sarchi was a stopping point for oxcart caravans carrying coffee and other goods to markets. Broken wagons were repaired here and soon the town was a center for oxcart production and woodworking. While the demand for oxcarts has dropped, Sarchi's handmade furniture is a coveted item in Costa Rica and has spawned a flourishing local industry.

Lankester Botanical Gardens

Lankester Gardens near Cartago has been recognized by the American Orchid Society as having what is probably the most notable orchid house in Costa Rica.

Now run by the University of Costa Rica as a center to promote horticulture and environmental education, this garden is a must see location for those with a green thumb. Gardens include epiphytes, tropical flora, cacti, and bamboo.

www.jardinbotanicolankester.org

Rodeo- Costa Rican Style

Costa Rica's cowboy culture is a popular and often celebrated part of life. Considering that many Tico children learn ride horses before they can walk it should come as no surprise that rodeos, Cabalgatas

(cross-country horse rides) and the Tope (dressage) are events found in every part of the country.

Tico rodeo has similarities to its counterpart in the U.S., like calf roping, bullriding, and rodeo clowns, but Costa Rica's Spanish heritage demands BULLFIGHTING.

Now before you get bent out of shape about what is going to happen to the bull, please realize that Tico's are easygoing and fun-loving people. Rather than killing the bull, like you would find in traditional Spanish bullfighting, Tico's seek to *annoy* the bull by *slapping* it.

So what happens is that they have about 30-40 guys in the bullring who are buzzed up on Imperial beer and Johnny Walker Red, taking turns slapping the bull. When you slap the bull, everyone cheers. If you can slap the bull on its head or face, everyone cheers louder. If you can slap the bull on his bull parts, the crowd cheers even louder still...

Of course all of this slapping tends to *really annoy* the bull, so he goes berserk and everyone loves it. Coming to a town near you, check it out.