

Great Costa Rica Adventures

With its exotic wildlife, sun-soaked coasts, and dramatic mountains, this Central American playground offers trips for all types of explorers.

May 2009

By Jennifer Flowers



Photo: Courtesy of the Costa Rica Tourism Board

With its exotic wildlife, sun-soaked coasts, and dramatic mountains, this Central American playground offers trips for all types of explorers.

Catch a Wave

Surfing enthusiasts from around the globe will be focused on Costa Rica this August, when the Billabong World Surfing Games are held at Jacó's Hermosa Beach. While this Pacific stretch's notorious breaks are mainly for experts, novices can learn to hang ten along the calmer shores of Manuel Antonio Beach, at the Manuel Antonio Surf School (*lessons from \$65*). Just a short stroll away are the 38 quiet and spacious rooms and suites of the **Arenas del Mar Beach & Nature Resort** (*doubles from \$260, breakfast included*).

Hit the Trails

Clouds perpetually blanket the upper reaches of the 26,000-acre Monteverde Reserve, home to pumas, jaguars, and thousands of plant and tree species, including 300 types of orchids. Selvatura Park (*hikes from \$40*) arranges two-hour guided natural-history walks through the low-lying rain forest.

Touch the Sky

A 1.7-mile zipline network in the Monteverde Reserve operated by Costa Rica Sky Adventures (*tours from \$65*) gives airborne guests close-up glimpses of forest-dwelling mammals, like the fuzzy brown *martilla*, as well as views of the smoldering Arenal Volcano. A nighttime tour offers views of the volcano's brilliant orange lava flow.

Ride the River

Float quietly past the howler monkeys, green iguanas, crocodiles, and toucans that reside on the thickly forested banks of Guanacaste's Tenorio River while rafting with Ríos Tropicales (*half-day trips from \$95*). Expert guides can lead you through adrenaline-pumping rapids or slower, meandering waters. Recover two hours away in one of the 310 dark wood-accented rooms—all have balconies—at the new JW Marriott Guanacaste Resort & Spa (*doubles from \$369*).

Lend a Hand

More than 500,000 species thrive in Costa Rica's diverse landscape, an impressive 25 percent of which is under official protection. Eco-minded Green Magic Travel (*pricing depends on project*) organizes customized itineraries with volunteer activities—protecting green, hawksbill, and leatherback turtle nests with park rangers in Tortuguero National Park, or counting species like the endangered rainbow-hued scarlet macaw in Corcovado National Park.