

Over 150 articles about Costa Rica, 1000 links

InfoCostaRica
Costa Rica Travel Site

- Featured Tours
- Featured Hotels

Costa Rica Travel Tips
Learn the secrets

READ MORE

Costa Rica in General | Traveling to Costa Rica | Business in Costa Rica | Articles | Forums | Contact Us

Traditions ... by Infocostarica Staff

Costa Ricans, as people in other countries, are caught between old cultural forces and new ones that influence especially its young inhabitants. Ticos as a whole still respect conservative values, but they're starting to adopt several American cultural traits. Even then, Costa Ricans still possess a unique identity that distinguishes them from other places and even from their neighboring countries.



Ticos are pretty homogeneous racially and culturally speaking, since only 1% of their population is considered to be Indian, and the other Black and Chinese minorities aren't very numerous. A traveler going through Latin America will notice the Ticos's relative "whiteness" when compared to the people of other places. Ticos also have a very high level of education, and the literacy rate is 96%. Thus, Costa Ricans define themselves as unique and different from their neighboring countries.

Costa Ricans are still conservative when it comes to family issues. Even though the amount of single-mother families is extremely high, family ties are still very strong even in these types of households. Traditions revolve around the family from the moment of birth to that of death. Some immensely important family traditions are: baptisms, first communions, engagement parties, weddings and funerals. These events are attended by the extended family as well as by a large quantity of friends and their family members. Also, most Costa Ricans still live at home until they are married, and leaving the household to go to college or to gain independence is still very rare.



Traditions are also shaped by gender differences and the "machismo" system. Men and women are expected to act differently from each other, and to respect their roles. A large proportion of Costa Rican women are

professionals and hold important positions in both businesses and the government, but they still retain some traits that are traditional and conservative.

Besides traditions that revolve around the family, there are also several significant religious celebrations. The main religious events are: Easter Week or Semana Santa , Christmas Week and August second, which is the celebration of the Virgin of the Angels. Costa Rica is also different from other Latin American countries, because it practices a "lukewarm" Catholicism that causes a strange mixture of partying and religious celebration during these holidays. Also, the Indian population is so small, that religious events don't offer a mixture of Catholic and Indian practices; thus, Costa Rican processions, for example, aren't as colorful as in Mexico or Guatemala.

For Easter Week, many people that live near the capital city of San Jose choose to go to the beach; for them, Easter is mostly a time to relax and to have a good time. However, some people choose to stay at home and to join religious celebrations that include masses and processions. Nearly everything shuts down from Thursday to Monday, which is why it's a good idea to stock up on goods before then, and to avoid traveling, since some transportation services also stop completely. During the Christmas celebration and some days previous to New Years, the same phenomenon occurs. A lot of people attend religious celebrations held at churches or at homes (like rosary and prayer events that offer large quantities of food and drink), while others choose to escape their urban routines and go to the beach. Another religious celebration is the pilgrimage to the Basilica de los Angeles in Cartago city, in honor of the Virgin of the Angels. During this holiday many people walk to the city from all parts of the country, in order to pay a "promise" to the Virgin (when she answered a prayer) or to renew their faith. This event is incredible because of its magnitude and also because some believers travel for days or even weeks in order to reach their destination and to honor the Virgin. Even though some Costa Ricans decide to party during religious celebrations, they still prefer to do it in the company of their family, thus maintaining cultural and family unity. Ticos are extremely friendly to foreigners, and once they've gotten to know you they'll invite you to family gatherings and celebrations. After all, hospitality is probably the most widespread tradition in Costa Rica.