



## Costa Rica information

### Travel documents

U.S. citizens traveling to Costa Rica must have a passport that is valid for six months after their expected return date. No entry visas are required for U.S. citizens. Please check [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) to confirm passport validity requirements prior to your tour. Citizens of all other countries should contact their appropriate embassies to find out what specific documentation is required for them to travel.

For travelers under the age of 18, parents or guardians will be asked to sign a liability waiver. This allows the Group Leader to assume limited power of attorney and sign liability releases for certain included activities. If the traveler's parent or guardian does not submit this waiver, the traveler cannot participate in those specific activities.

### Vaccinations and health precautions

To learn about necessary vaccinations, we recommend you visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or consult your physician for the most updated information.

### Tour Director and bus driver

You will have the same Tour Director during your entire tour and they will also act as local guides throughout the tour. You will typically have the same bus driver during the entire tour, as well.

## Tipping

It's customary to tip your Tour Director and bus drivers as a token of appreciation at the end of the tour. We recommend:

- \$6–8 per person per day for the Tour Director
- \$3 per person per day for the bus driver
- \$1-2 per person per tour for each guided activity (like zip-lining, kayaking, etc.)

We encourage Group Leaders to collect tip money from their travelers before leaving on tour. You can tip in U.S. dollars and present the money to your Tour Director and bus driver at the end of tour in the tip envelopes provided by EF. If you have any questions on tipping, please reach out to your Tour Consultant.

## Currency

Costa Rica's currency is the colon. However, U.S. dollars are accepted throughout Costa Rica, so you do not need to change money. Visit [xe.com](http://xe.com) for current exchange rates and more information.

When you use an ATM, you will be given colon. We recommend withdrawing money from a bank or ATM machine instead of using credit cards. Although most shops accept credit cards, the phone lines are much slower, which makes using credit cards time-consuming. It may also cause delays in your group's schedule. Please note that traveler's checks are usually not accepted in Costa Rica.

Be sure to notify your bank or credit card company that you will be traveling abroad and ask what international fees you may have to pay.

## Transportation

Travel time between destinations on your Costa Rica tour may take between three and four hours, depending on road conditions and the season. The country's topography includes curved roads and many steep hills. Those prone to motion sickness should consider bringing medication. The distance between destinations is normally longer than it appears on a map due to limited highways and many unpaved roads (especially going to and from Monteverde).

## Accommodations

While you are in Costa Rica you will stay in hotels and lodges which are simple, but clean and comfortable. Accommodations vary from large and modern hotels to rustic lodges, separate cabins, and family-owned bungalow-style hotels. Some may have swimming pools. Be aware that tropical conditions in Costa Rica make insects and other small animals (such as ants, mosquitoes, lizards, spiders, and frogs) more prevalent. Some hotels in Tortuguero that are more surrounded by nature will have mosquito nets on the beds.

Students under the age of 20 will share rooms with two or three other travelers of the same gender in rooms that will have single or shared double beds (or a combination of the two). Adults will share twin rooms with other adults of the same gender. Please note that groups may not all have rooms next to each other (some may even be on different floors) and that hotels may be located outside of the city center. Electrical voltage and outlets in Costa Rica are the same as in the U.S., so you will not need an adapter or converter.

## Phones and internet

If you plan to use your personal cell phone on tour, contact your wireless provider to see what fees you may incur for calling, texting, or using data abroad. Wi-Fi may not be available at all hotels in Costa Rica, and may be unreliable when available, even on the road. Travelers should plan to be without Wi-Fi for 1–2 days at a time. Consider buying a phone plan for more consistent and reliable connectivity.

## Local food

Costa Rican food is flavorful but not spicy. Typical dishes include: rice and beans, plantains, spaghetti, vegetables, beef, chicken, pork, and fresh fruit. Fresh fruit juices will often be served with meals, in addition to water. Water is chlorinated throughout the country and safe to drink, however some people may choose to use bottled water. Bottled water is available for purchase everywhere for \$1–2.

## Safety

Always inform your Tour Director if you should need to leave the group at any point. Store valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes and refrain from carrying large sums of money or wearing valuable jewelry. Although hotels in coastal areas may be located near the beach, swimming is only permitted in certain areas designated by EF for safety reasons. Please be sure to read EF's *Travel & Safety Guide* before going on tour.

## Bathrooms and showers

While public bathroom facilities are generally available in Costa Rica, it will often cost about 50 cents (or 250 colónes) to use the facilities, which will include getting toilet paper from an attendant before you enter. Something to note: many hotel and public bathrooms do not permit toilet paper to be flushed. Water pressure in Costa Rica is often lower than in the U.S. and the amount of hot water can be limited, so be prepared for short showers. Additionally, you will often find electric shower head heaters in your hotels. This is a tankless, on-demand hot water system that is very popular and common in Costa Rica.

## Weather

Costa Rica has a tropical climate with two seasons: wet and dry. The wet season begins in May and lasts through November. During the wet season it will rain every day, which can be anything from a light rain to a downpour. The dry season begins in December and lasts through April. Temperatures remain fairly constant throughout the year but may vary according to region. Please check [weather.com](http://weather.com) for your destinations and travel periods.

## Packing

We suggest bringing the following items: a light jacket or windbreaker, rain gear, comfortable walking shoes, water shoes, hat, sunscreen, a swimsuit and beach towel, insect repellent, and binoculars. You may also want to have a small backpack you can carry during the day to hold extra clothes in case the weather changes or you get caught in the rain. Many airlines charge fees for the first checked bag to Costa Rica, so be sure to verify with your airline before you depart or ensure your suitcase fits the allowances for carry-on luggage.

## Luggage

Fees for checking a bag on the international flights between the United States and Costa Rica are not included in the price of your tour. Travelers may pay to check their bag(s) at the airport when checking in or avoid paying any baggage fees by only traveling with carry-on luggage. Please contact the airline for baggage restrictions and regulations. And, while fees for checking a bag on flights between the United States and Costa Rica are not included in the price of your tour, fees for checking a bag on flights between Costa Rica and Panama are included.

## Notes on specific activities

Travelers may come across jellyfish while snorkeling in Guanacaste and should let their Tour Director know if there are any relevant allergies. Travelers may choose to sit out during the activity.

There are many ways to enjoy the beautiful hot springs in Arenal. However, please note that the water slides at these facilities are off-limits to all EF travelers, regardless of age. If found in violation of this protocol, travelers may be sent home at their own expense. Additionally, the Arenal Hot Springs does not accept credit cards, so travelers should bring extra cash with them in case they want to rent a locker to store their belongings or to purchase snacks. They may also leave their personal items on the bus free of charge.

In Sarapiquí, groups will experience difficulty levels of 2–3 while whitewater rafting (depending on whether it's dry season or rainy season). Groups will be divided into smaller groups of 5 to 7 travelers per raft, each with their own local guide. All travelers must wear closed-toe shoes or sandals with straps—flip flops are not acceptable footwear for this activity.

For those travelers participating in ziplining and/or whitewater rafting, there is a weight limit of 200 lbs for safety reasons. Before ziplining, operators will need to confirm that travelers approaching this weight restriction fit comfortably into the ziplining harness before being allowed to participate.

## Additional information

Some groups may visit a regional school or interact with local students on tour. We ask that you do not bring any donations for these visits. EF has sustainable partnerships with the schools and organizations already, so our travelers can focus on having meaningful interactions in Costa Rica instead.