Weather & Destination Specific Information

Costa Rica & Panama Adventure

For any questions or concerns about your upcoming tour not addressed here, please call 1-800-826-2266

WEATHER & DESTINATION SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Time Zone: Chicago is located in the same time zone as Costa Rica. This is the Central Time Zone. During daylight savings time (from mid-March through mid-October) Chicago is one hour ahead of Costa Rica's time.

Weather: Average High/Low

City	February	March
San Jose	78°F/66°F	80°F/67°F
Arenal	89F/71°F	89°F/69°F
Monteverde	81°F/59°F	83°F/61°F
Panama City	89°F/76°F	90°F/77°F

Currency: The unit of currency in Costa Rica is the Colon. Many merchants in Costa Rica will also accept U.S. currency but generally give change back in Colones. Panama uses the Panamanian Balboa but it has the same exchange as the US dollar, so no exchange is necessary for Panama.

Currency exchange rates fluctuate on a daily basis. A helpful website for referencing current rates is www.oanda.com.

Electrical Current: The electric current and electrical outlets in Costa Rica and Panama are 110 – 120 volts, which is the same as the United States. It is not necessary to bring an adapter or converter.

International Guide & Driver: Your Driver and Guide will be with you for the majority of your tour. Should they meet your expectations it is suggested you tip them to show your appreciation. The suggested gratuity for your Driver in Costa Rica is $4 (USD or the equivalent in colons) per person, per day and for your Guide we suggest $5 (USD or the equivalent in colons) per person, per day. Any tipping is on an individual basis and is given directly to the individual the last day that they are with you.

Holiday Vacations Tour Director: The suggested gratuity for your Holiday Vacations Tour Director is $8 to $10 per person, per day. Any tipping is on an individual basis and is given directly to the Tour Director at the end of the tour.

Language: Spanish is the spoken and written language in Costa Rica and Panama. The staff at the hotels and restaurants may speak some English so communication is generally not a problem. In addition, you will find some locals do speak English.
However, it is always a good idea to have a phrase book or app so that you can greet the locals in their native language.

Meals on Your Own: The suggested gratuity for waitstaff serving non-included meals is approximately 10%. It is not necessary to tip for takeaway (fast food) or cafeteria-style meals. Some restaurants and bars automatically add a gratuity that may or may not be given directly to the server. When in doubt ask your server.

Packing Tips: Due to frequent weather changes, you may want to dress in layers and bring a light sweater or jacket. The following tips are provided as suggestions to help you safely and adequately prepare for your tour.

– Bring a hat, sunglasses, binoculars, and small umbrella or rain jacket

– Bring sunscreen & insect repellent

– Bring a camera and memory cards in your carry-on bag

– Pack chargers for electronic devices

– Pack dry fit clothing (jeans are not recommended)

– Pack shirts that are made of cotton or light synthetic (short & long-sleeved)

– Pack footwear that is waterproof, lightweight with closed toes (hiking boots and/or tennis shoes)

Public Restrooms: Few official public toilets exist, but it's acceptable to use one in a restaurant or hotel even if you're not a customer. Toilet paper is seldom in stalls – an attendant may provide it as you enter, for a tip**. Guests will want to bring small packages of tissues along for this purpose**. Do not flush paper – deposit it in the bin next to the toilet. Many toilets have an integrated bidet tube, which unfortunately can get quite mucky. The knob for the bidet is usually to the right of the toilet tank – open it very slowly to gauge the pressure. Some toilets are of the 'squat' variety – use the hose (and bucket, if provided) to 'flush' and to wash your hands. In cities, it's a good idea to make a mental note of all Western-style fast-food joints and five-star hotels, as these are where you'll find the most sanitary facilities.

Water: Tap water is generally considered safe to locals but it is suggested not to drink the water from the tap. Many hotels provide bottled water at a cost, and it is highly recommended to purchase more as needed