



Costa Rica
Named by Christopher Columbus who landed there in 1502.



Costa Rica means
“rich coast”.

Columbus believed the land to be filled with precious metals. He was wrong. But the land is rich in many other ways.

Costa Rica in Central America

Long form:
Republic of Costa Rica
Spanish long form:
República de Costa Rica



A Few Key Facts:

Population: 5,256,612 (2023 est.)

Area: 19,730 sq mi.

About one-third the size of Florida.

Topography: Coastal plains. Center is 3 rugged mountain ranges up to 12,529 ft.

Mean elevation: 2,448 feet.

Border countries:

- Nicaragua 194 miles.
- Panama 216 miles.



Clay-Colored Thrush
 Costa Rica National Bird

Climate: Tropical and sub-tropical.

Temps: Around 80° F year-round. Cooler in mountains.

Rainy season: May to November.

Dry season: Dec to Apr.

Monthly Rainfall (inches)

	San Jose Costa Rica	Naples FL
Jan	0.6	2.1
Feb	0.2	2.3
Mar	0.8	2.3
Apr	1.8	2.3
May	9.1	3.4
Jun	9.4	8.9
Jul	8.3	9.2
Aug	9.4	9.0
Sep	12.2	8.7
Oct	12.0	3.8
Nov	5.7	2.1
Dec	1.6	1.7

More about the People:

Very low birth rate: 1.7 per woman.

Literacy (Age 15 read/write): 98%.

Education Expenditures: 6.7% of GDP (USA: 6.1% of GDP).

Median Age (2023): 35 years (USA: 38.5 yrs).

Life Expectancy at Birth (2023): 79.6 (USA 80.8).

Languages

- Spanish (official).
- English (tourist areas, Carib. coast).

Ethnic groups (est.)

- White or Mestizo 84%. Mestizo = White + Indigenous
- Mulatto 7%. Mulatto = White + Black
- Indigenous 2%.
- Black or African descent 1%.
- Other/Unspecified 6%.

Religions (2021 est.)

- Roman Catholic 48%.
- Evangelical and Pentecostal 20%.
- Jehovah's Witness 1%.
- Other Protestant 1%.
- Other 3%.
- None 27% (mostly RC heritage).

Nickname of People:

- Ticos and Ticas.

un poco (a little)
 un poquito (diminutive, a little bit, most Spanish speakers)
 un poquitico (Costa Ricans)

Costa Rica Has 7 Provinces

Provinces have limited powers.

No provincial governors.

No provincial legislatures.



Government: Presidential Republic (similar to USA).

Head of State AND

Head of Government:

President Rodrigo CHAVES Robles

– Since 8 May 2022.

– 4-year term.



President Rodrigo CHAVES Robles

- Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Ohio State University.
- Favours a strict ban on abortion, including in cases of rape.
- Opposes euthanasia and same-sex marriages (legal in CR).
- Global warming is not a priority.
- Supports mining and oil and gas.

Unicameral Legislative Assembly or Asamblea Legislativa

- 57 seats.
- Popular election, proportionate by Province.
- 4-year terms.
- Building built 2020.
- Next election Feb 2026.



US Citizens in Costa Rica

- 120,000 US citizens (many retirees) live in Costa Rica.
- 2022, 1.3 mil US citizens (55% of all tourists) visited Costa Rica.

Visa Required? No.

US State Dept Alerts: Exercise increased caution due to crime, mostly petty, some violent.

I always felt 100% safe.

Flag:

Independence from Spain: Sept 15, 1821.

National holiday:

Independence Day, September 15.

Time Zone: UTC-6:

Like US Central Time except...

No Daylight Saving Time.



Health-related Matters

Drinking Water: Highest quality. US tourists can drink tap water anywhere – no problems.

Health Expenditure: 7.9% of GDP (USA 18.8% of GDP).

Adult Obesity: 25.7% (USA 36.2%).

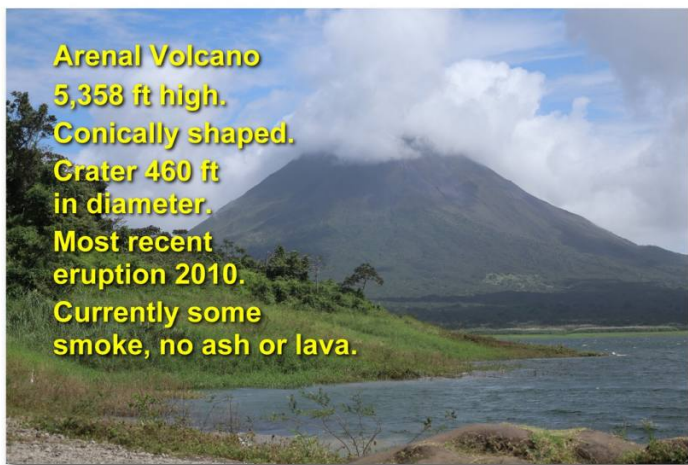
Tobacco Use: 9% (USA 23%).

More than 100 Volcanoes in CR.

5 Active:

- Rincon de la Vieja. Last erupted 1998.
- Arenal. Most active one. 1968 78 died, 2 villages lost.
- Poas. Erupted 2017.
- Turrialba. Erupted 2017.
- Irazu. 11,260 ft. Just east of San Jose. Spewed ash over San Jose 1963 and 1965.





Economy (IMF 2023 est.)
Real GDP (purchasing power parity): \$141 billion (USA \$26.9 tril.)
Real GDP per capita (PPP): \$26,809 (USA \$80,412).
<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2023/October/>
Unemployment rate: 18%.
Youth unemployment rate: 45%.

Economy is trade-based.
Exports (2021) \$24 billion.
 – 38% to USA.
 – Medical instruments, bananas, pineapples, orthopedic, food.
Imports (2021): \$22.3 billion.
 – From United States 41%, China 13%, Mexico 7%.
 – Refined petroleum, broadcasting equipment, cars, medical instruments, medicines.

Electricity access: 100% of pop.
Electricity generation:
 – Hydroelectric 71%.
 – Geothermal 15%.
 – Wind 12%.
 – Biomass and waste: 1%.
 – Fossil fuels and other: 1%.
Coal, petroleum, natural gas resources: None.
Military Spending: Zero. No army.

USA (2021)
 Natural Gas 38%
 Coal 21%

Currency: Colon ¢
US\$1= ¢ 499
Coins ¢5-500

Exchange rate US\$ to Colones 2014-2024

USD to CRC Chart +3.81% (year)

1 USD = 516.479 CRC (Jan 21, 2024, 16:00 UTC)
<https://www.x-rates.com/currencyrates/?from=USD&to=CRC&amount=1>

2,750,000 foreign tourists in Costa Rica in 2023. Big increase from Covid years, but still well below 2016-2019.
2023: USA 54%, Europe 18%.

Pre-Covid, tourism was nearly 6% of GDP.

International Tourist Arrivals in Costa Rica 2012-2023

Year	Arrivals
2012	2,343,213
2013	2,427,941
2014	2,526,817
2015	2,660,357
2016	2,925,128
2017	2,950,889
2018	3,016,667
2019	3,139,000
2020	1,011,912
2021	1,347,055
2022	2,346,537
2023	2,751,134

<https://www.st-ga.org/en/statistics/tourism>

Costa Rica History - 1
1502: Christopher Columbus arrived. Named it Costa Rica because some indigenous gave him gold gifts. But CR had little gold.
1561: Permanent colonial settlement.
1502-1820: Colony of Spain. Hoped-for gold and other riches never materialized. Sparsely developed and impoverished.

Costa Rica History - 2

1808: Coffee introduced from Cuba. Became principal crop.

1821: Central America declared independence from Spain. →

1824-1838: CR was a State in Federal Republic of Central America. Incl:
Mexican state of Chiapas.
Costa Rica. El Salvador.
Guatemala. Honduras. Nicaragua.



Costa Rica History - 3

Federation was unstable. Civil wars.
1838-1848: Costa Rica broke off and became an Independent State, as did the others.

Since 1848: Independent republic. Quick diplomatic relations with USA and some European countries.

1874: Banana cultivation began. United Fruit Co.



Costa Rica History - 4

From 1917: Government became unstable. Military dictatorships.

1948: A disputed election caused the Costa Rican Civil War led by José Figueres Ferrer (1906-1990, now a national hero). 44 days. 2000 people died. Victorious junta drafted a new constitution that: [Next Slide]

Costa Rica History - 5

- Guaranteed universal suffrage (including women and blacks).
- Dismantled all military.
- Nationalized banks.
- Outlawed the Communist Party.
- Guaranteed public education for all.
- Established a civil service system.

Figueres became President.

Since 1948: Costa Rica is a stable democracy.



One last point: Drugs

CIA Fact Book: “Costa Rica remains a significant transshipment point for cocaine enroute to the United States from South America; a key transit point in international narcotics trafficking; transit and warehousing hub for illicit drug trafficking; growing domestic drug consumption problem; a major source of precursor or essential chemicals used in the production of illicit narcotics.”

Worrisome NY York Times Sept 16, 2024



The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com> > World > Americas

How a Tourist Paradise Became a Drug-Trafficking Magnet

1 day ago — Costa Rica's lush rainforests, which blanket a quarter of the country, are being infiltrated by cartels on a quest to find new trafficking ...

Costa Rica surpassed Mexico to become the world's leading transshipment point for cocaine destined for the United States, Europe and beyond in 2020, according to the U.S. State Department. Mexico returned to the top spot last year, but Costa Rica remains close behind.

Some say The Times overstated the problem. Others say it's accurate.

We will start by heading north from San Jose. Then down to the Pacific coast. Then inland over mountains to San Jose.



Our Minibus



● Places We Will Visit

The center of Costa Rica is all mountains. The only lowlands are along the coasts.



So driving north from San Jose, we're quickly in lovely hills.

Driving North from San Jose

Comment: I took all photos in this presentation unless otherwise indicated.

Driving North from San José Small Farmstead

Every Home:
Pedestal
Garbage
Bin - Wild
Animals

We stop at Los Volcanes
Coffee Plantation
Owned by Miguel and His Wife
Six Employees

Red Beans Are Ripe
Green Not Yet

Visitors picked and sorted the
beans, too. Both
red and yellow
could be ripe.
Because all beans
don't ripen at the
same time, must
pick each bush 4
times over several
weeks.

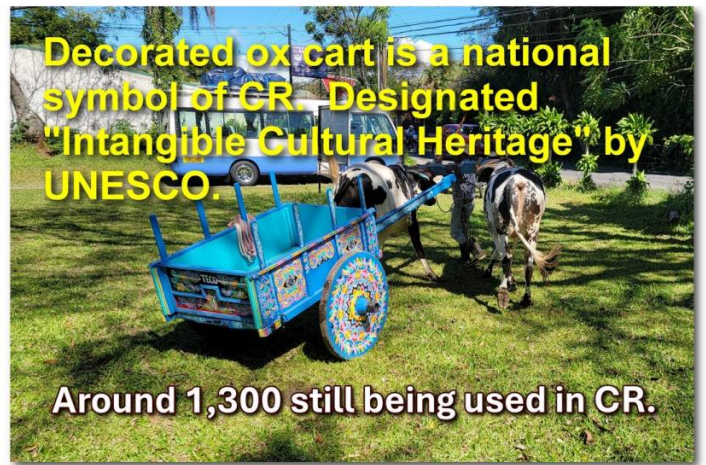
Drying in the sun

Husks Removed

Roasting



Farmer Using an Ox Cart



Decorated ox cart is a national symbol of CR. Designated "Intangible Cultural Heritage" by UNESCO.

Around 1,300 still being used in CR.



Driving in the mountains, we ran into clouds.



And beautiful countryside



Spotted our first bird: A keel-billed toucan.

By the end of two weeks in Costa Rica, I had seen and photographed all of these birds!

Acorn Woodpecker	Flame-colored Tanager (Green)	Passerine Tanager
Baby Hummingbirds	Flame-colored Tanager (Red)	Quetzal (female)
Baltimore Oriole	Grackle	Red-legged Honeycreeper
Bare-throated Tiger Heron	Great White Egret	Ringed Kingfisher
Black Vultures	Green Heron	Roseate Spoonbill
Blue Heron	Jacana	Scarlet Macaw
Blue-Grey Tanager	Keel Bill Toucan	Scarlet-rumped tanager
Brown Pelicans	Lesser Kiskadee	Scintillant Hummingbird
Clay-colored thrush	Magenta-Throated Hummingbird	Stilt
Cormorants and Egrets on an island	Magnificent Frigatebirds	Tolomonco Hummingbird
Cormorants	Motmot	Yellow-crowned Night Herons
Crested Caracara	Osprey	
Egrets	Palm Tanager	
	Parakeet	

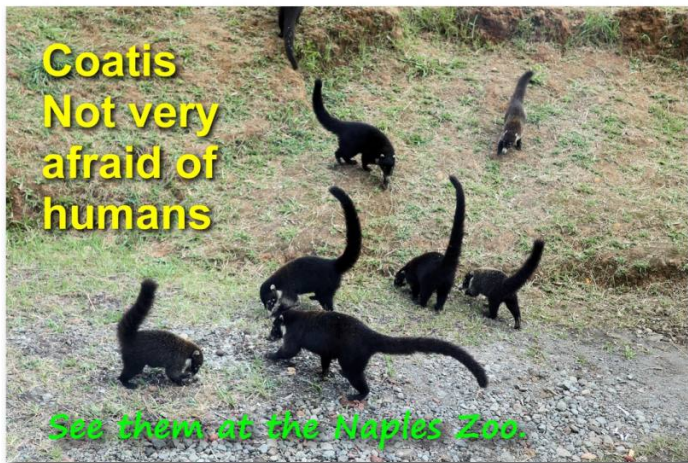


**La Paz Waterfall
121 feet.**



**Coatis
aka Coatimundi**

**Slender heads
Raccoon-like
Climbers and
diggers**



Wildlife other than birds that I saw and photographed in my two weeks in Costa Rica.

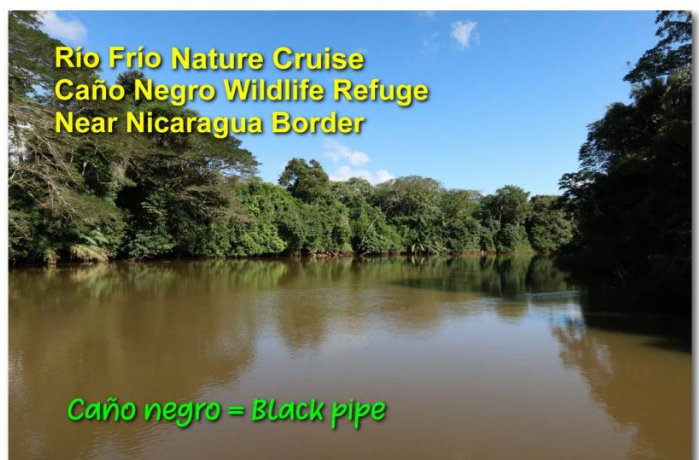
Agouti	Crocodile	Leaf-Cutter Ants
Basilisk	Green Iguana	Sloth (Two-toed)
Bats	Hermit Crabs	Yellow-Bellied Slider
Black Spiny-tailed Lizard	Howler Monkeys	Turtles
Caiman	Juvenile Caiman	
Centipede		
Coati		

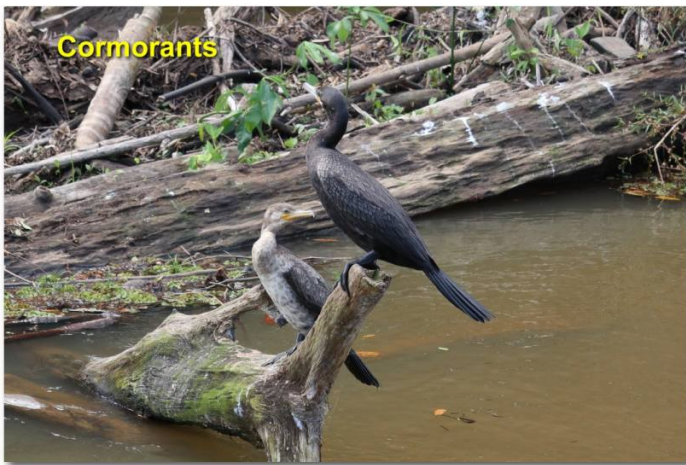


In 2021, little Costa Rica was the world's largest pineapple producer!

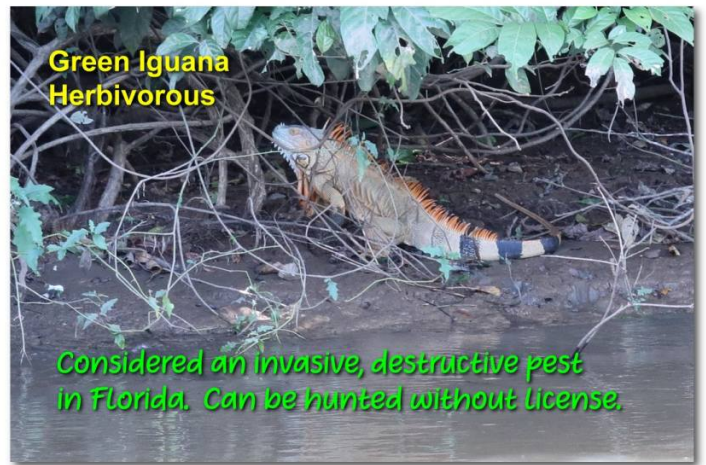
2021 Metric Tons	
Costa Rica	2,938,000
Indonesia	2,886,000
Philippines	2,860,000
Brazil	2,318,000
China	1,899,000

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/pineapple-production-by-country/>



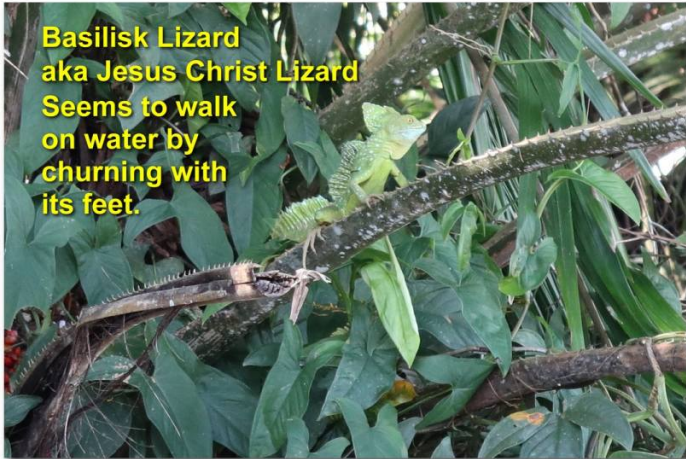


Cormorants



Green Iguana
Herbivorous

*Considered an invasive, destructive pest
in Florida. Can be hunted without license.*



Basilisk Lizard
aka Jesus Christ Lizard
Seems to walk
on water by
churning with
its feet.



Yellow-bellied Slider Turtles

Common Throughout Collier County



Howler Monkey



Caiman
Alligator family but generally smaller
More agile than gators



Bats
There are 6
vertically along
this tree



Bats
There are 6
vertically along
this tree



Papaya "Farmer" Our Trip Leader Jeffry
The heart of the papaya log is edible



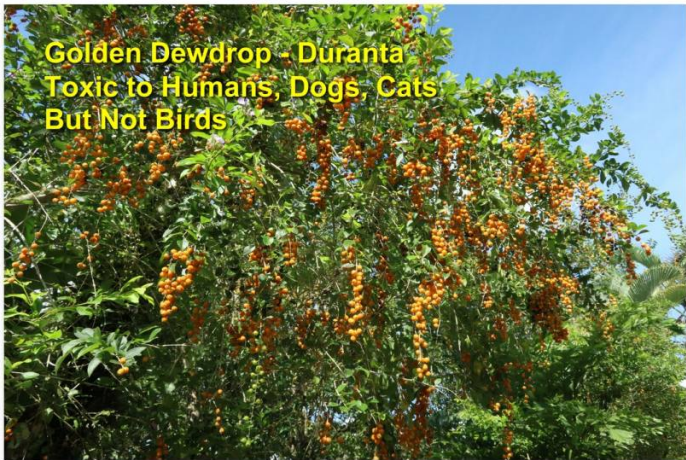
The cleaned and cooked heart of the papaya log on a tortilla



Tilajari Reserve Bananas and Banana Flower (Edible)



Crepe Ginger
Ornamental.
Medicinal.
Cosmetic.
Not edible.

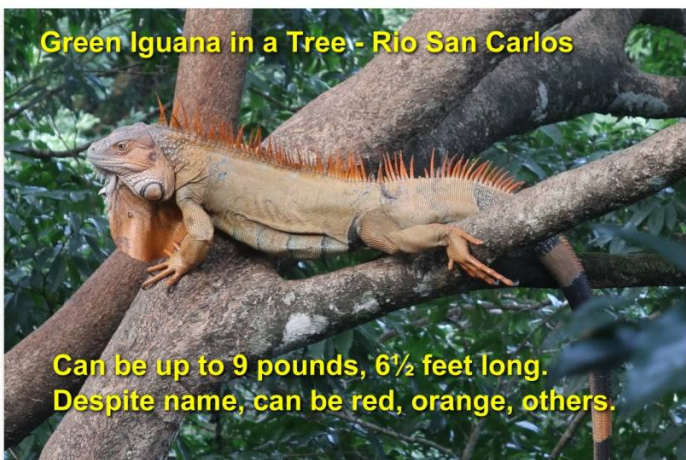


Golden Dewdrop - Duranta
Toxic to Humans, Dogs, Cats
But Not Birds



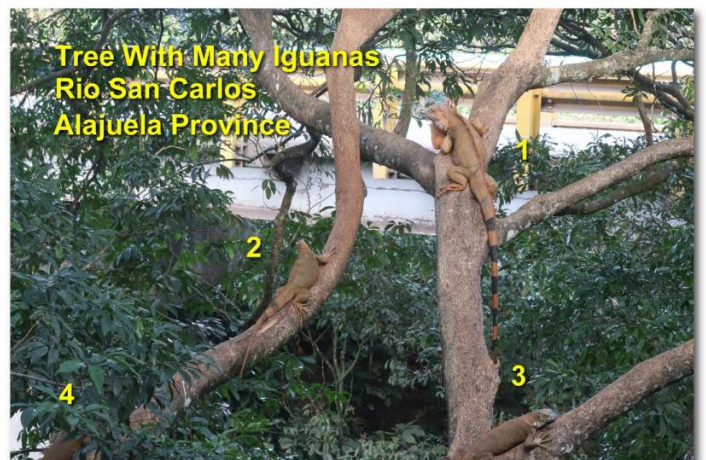
Tilajari Reserve Powderpuff Plant (Calliandra)

Can see at Freedom Park in Naples



Green Iguana in a Tree - Rio San Carlos

Can be up to 9 pounds, 6½ feet long.
Despite name, can be red, orange, others.




Tree With Many Iguanas
Rio San Carlos
Alajuela Province

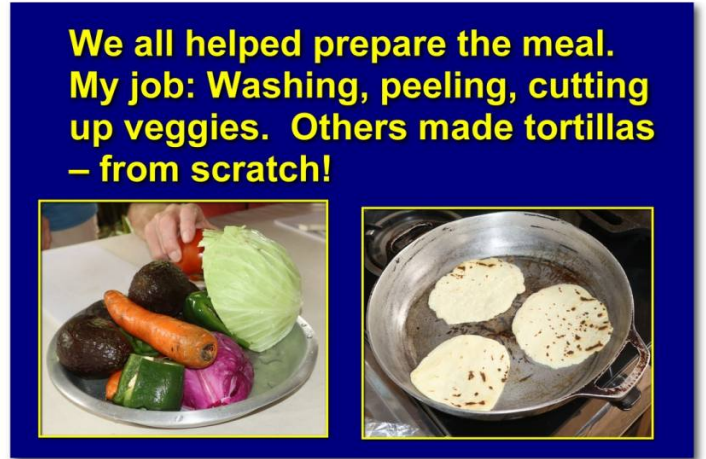


Our tour organizer (OAT) normally has a home-hosted lunch or dinner. Also discussion of a controversial topic. On this trip we combined those. Controversial topic was: "Sex education in a Catholic country".

Instead of locals cooking the meal, tour participants were given (orally, in Spanish) ingredients we had to purchase at a supermarket. We should get help from local customers or store staff. Mine: **Cinco platanos verdes.**

Then we all went to someone's house and had to help prepare the meal!





Because of insects, they sleep under netting

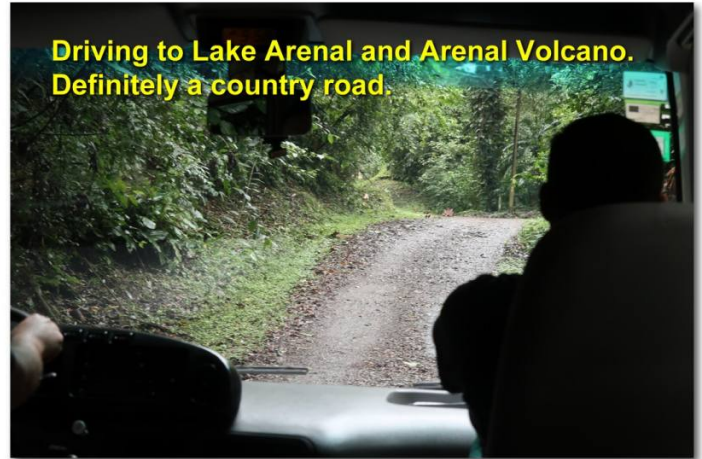


I made a friend.
And taught him how to take photos
with my camera.

His photo
of me



Somehow I
was roped
into folkloric
dancing!



Driving to Lake Arenal and Arenal Volcano.
Definitely a country road.



Our first sighting of an agouti –
rodent similar to but larger than a
guinea pig.

Another agouti
a few days later.

Naples Zoo has capybaras.
Similar but much larger.



PARQUE NACIONAL VOLCÁN ARENAL

We hiked to
Lake Arenal.

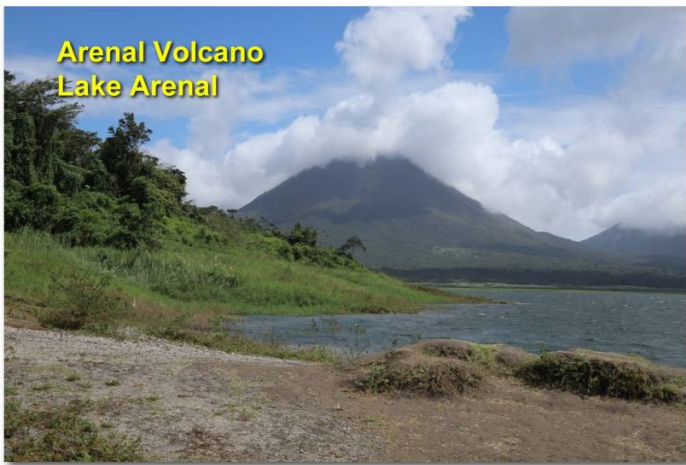
Motmot bird in
the trees



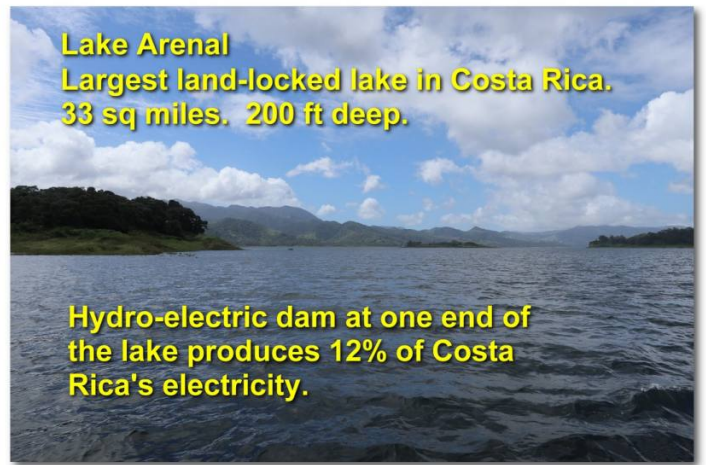
Latex leaking from a rubber tree in
Arenal Volcano National Park



COCODRILOS
NO NADAR
NO ALIMENTAR
CROCODILES
DO NOT SWIM
DO NOT FEED



**Arenal Volcano
Lake Arenal**



**Lake Arenal
Largest land-locked lake in Costa Rica.
33 sq miles. 200 ft deep.**

**Hydro-electric dam at one end of
the lake produces 12% of Costa
Rica's electricity.**



**Cormorants (black) and Egrets (White)
Lake Arenal**



**We had our picnic lunch on the
boat in this inlet**



Yucca 2 c's



**Yuca
(Cassava)
Chips**

**Bocadillo
(Sandwich)**



**Near Arenal we stayed at a hotel with view facing
west (Pacific Ocean) and Sunset.**



**But not before stopping at a local bar for some
Imperial (Costa Rica's beer) and (ugh) karaoke.**



La Cerveza de Costa Rica



**Drive to Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve
About 5,000 ft Altitude**



Nature Hike in Monteverde



Huge tree killed by strangler figs



Inside the hollow of that dead tree



Tolomonco Hummingbird at Monteverde Cloud Forest



Magenta-throated Hummingbird Hovering at Monteverde Cloud Forest



El Terruño de los Torres
Torres Family Farm
They Are Quakers



We had a casado lunch at the farm.
Typical Costa Rican lunch.

Casado means "married". Casado lunch marries various kinds of Costa Rican food. Always includes rice, beans, salad, tortilla.

Monteverde has a "sky-walk" of trails and hanging bridges.

Hanging bridge is suspended high above a valley below. Lots of sway!

INFO WALK MTV

SKY WALK TRAILS MAP SENDEROS

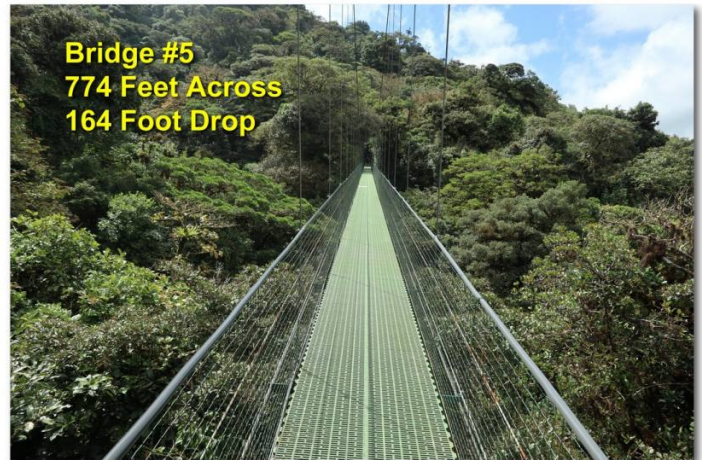
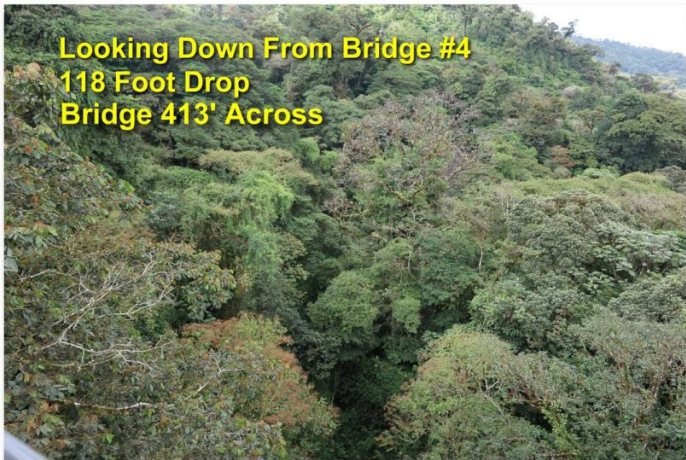
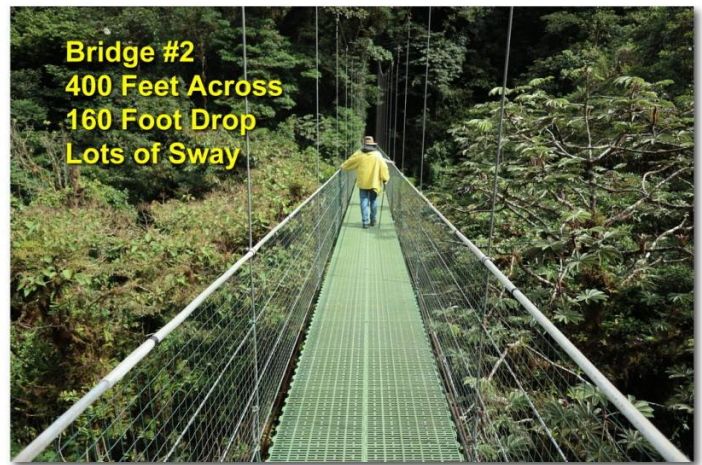
Hanging Bridges

Información	Altura y longitud
Puente / Bridge 1	66 m. / 216 ft. 15 m. / 49 ft.
Puente / Bridge 2	122 m. / 400 ft. 49 m. / 160 ft.
Puente / Bridge 3	14 m. / 54 ft. 17 m. / 56 ft.
Puente / Bridge 4	126 m. / 413 ft. 56 m. / 184 ft.
Puente / Bridge 5	236 m. / 774 ft. 50 m. / 164 ft.
Puente / Bridge 6	48 m. / 157 ft. 15 m. / 49 ft.

<https://losquesmonteverde.com/blog/sky-walk-monteverde-detailed-review/>



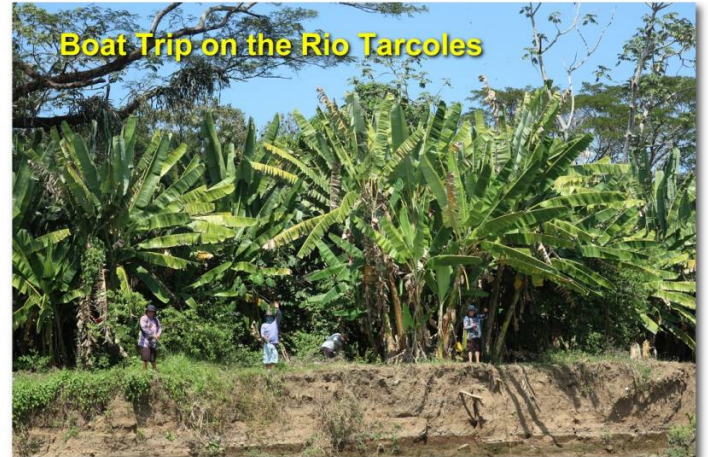
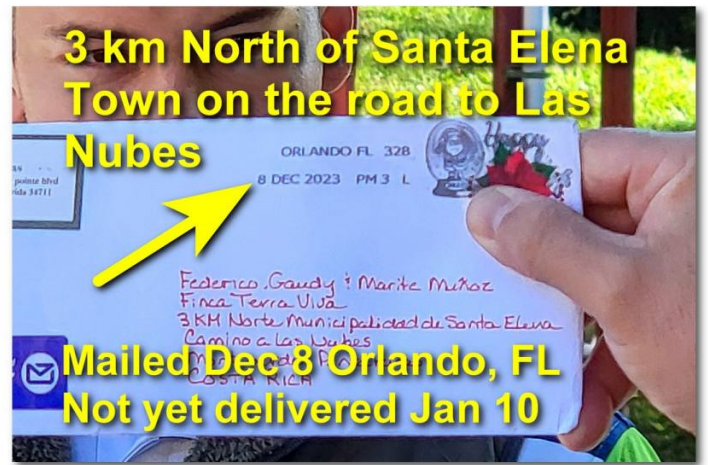
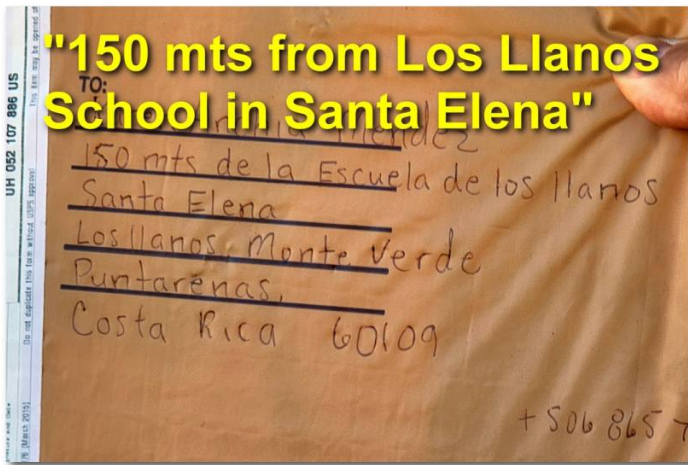
Hike to Bridge #1

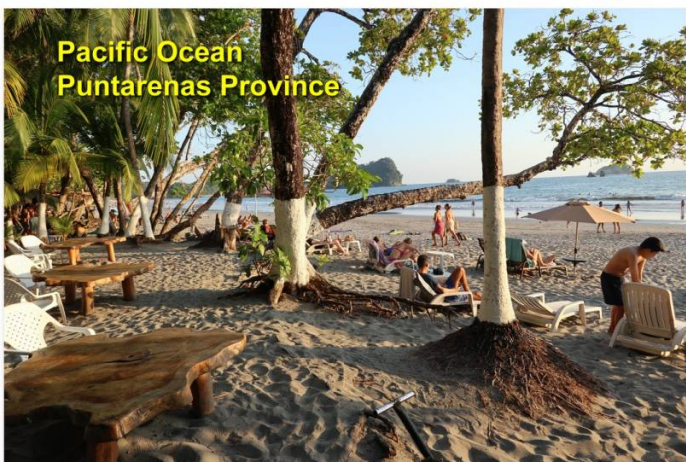
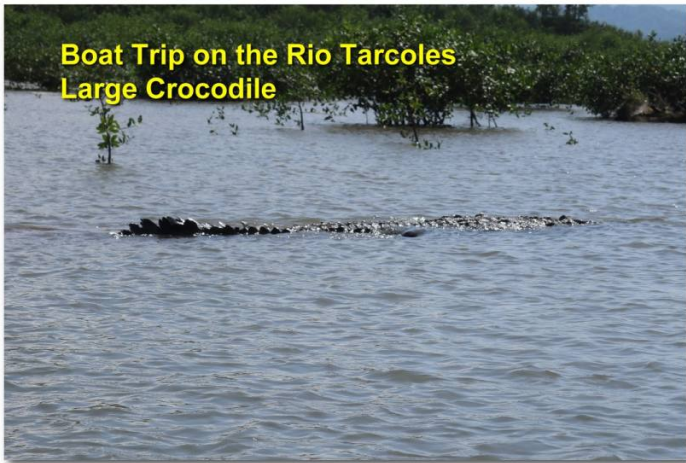
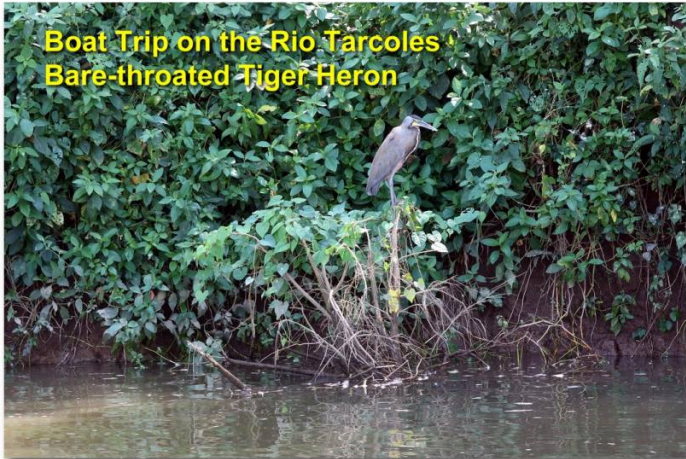
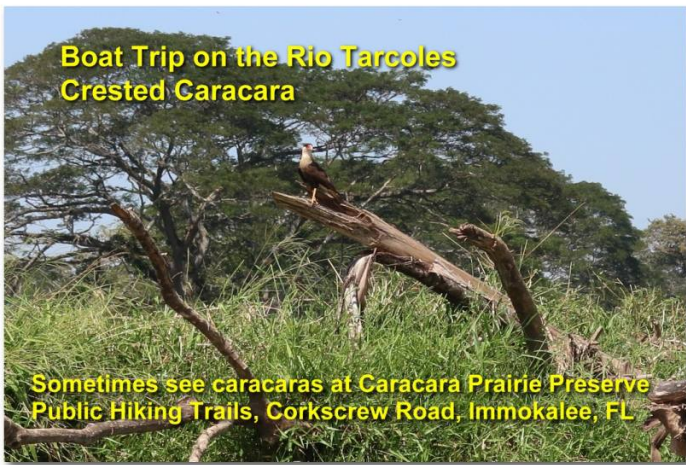


In Costa Rica, a centralized system for street addresses does not exist. People use landmarks as reference points in addressing letters.

"the farm 500 metres north of the school on the road to Palmira".

"2 km past Santa Clara Church on the road to Guacimal".







Spice Plantation
Vanilla Drying

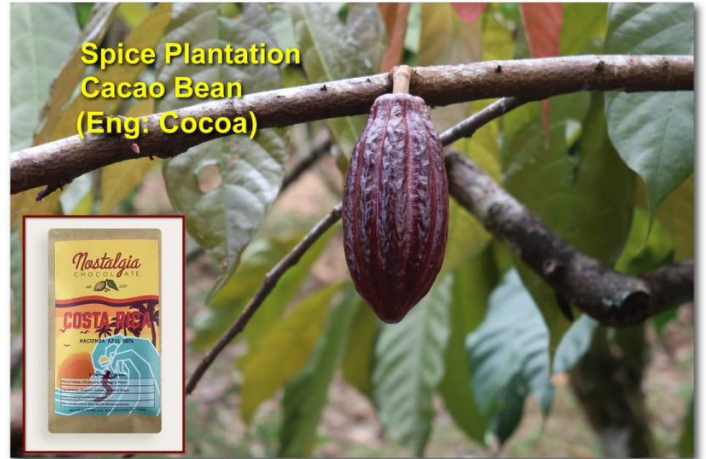


Spice Plantation
Hibiscus Drying

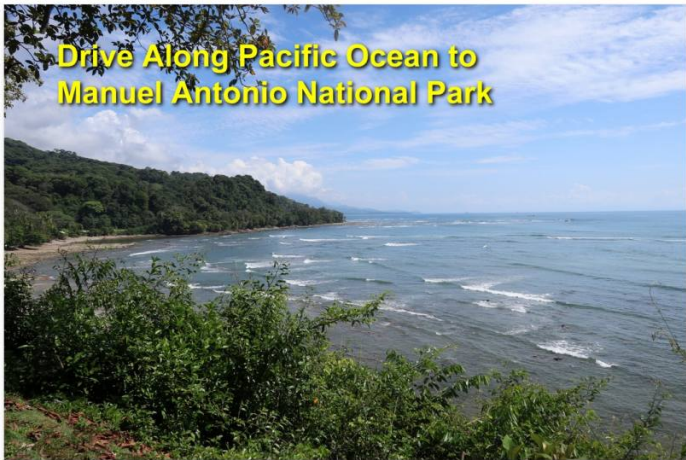


Spice Plantation
Cinnamon

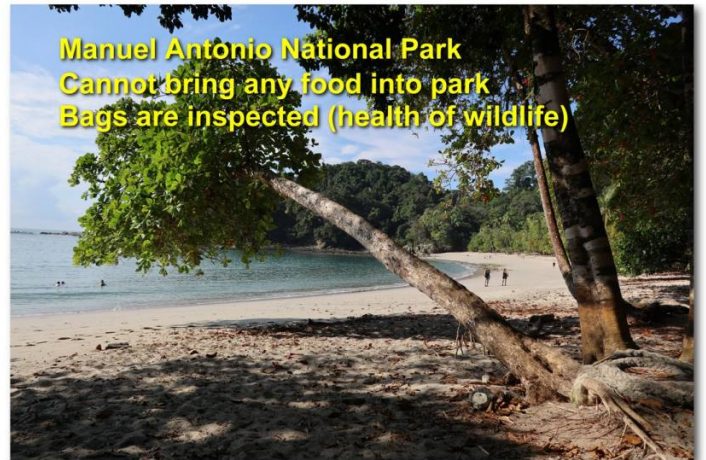
Cinnamon comes from the bark, not a nut



Spice Plantation
Cacao Bean
(Eng: Cocoa)



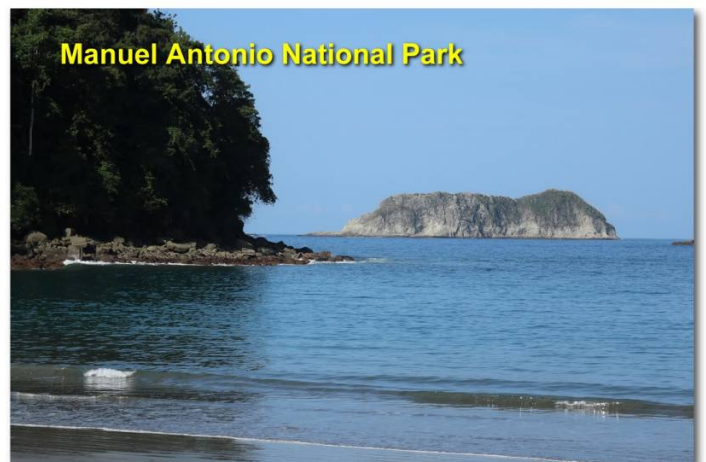
Drive Along Pacific Ocean to
Manuel Antonio National Park



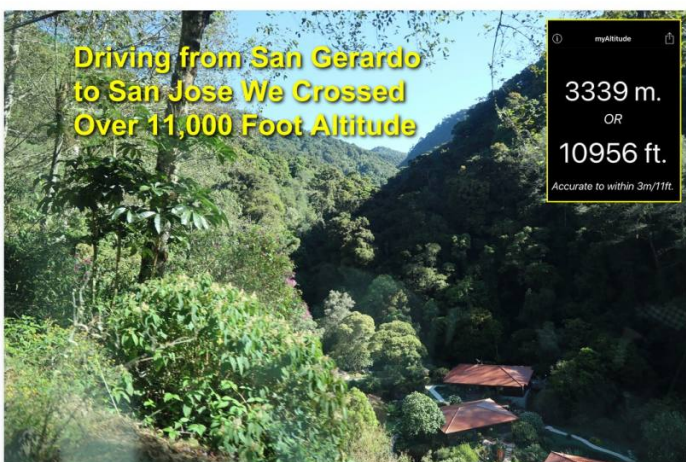
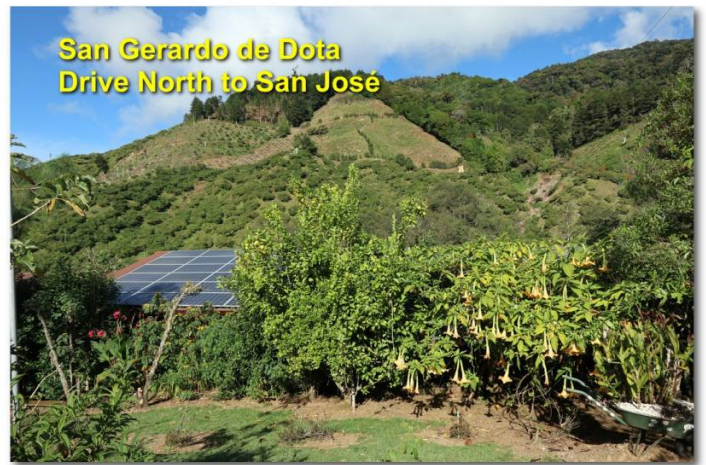
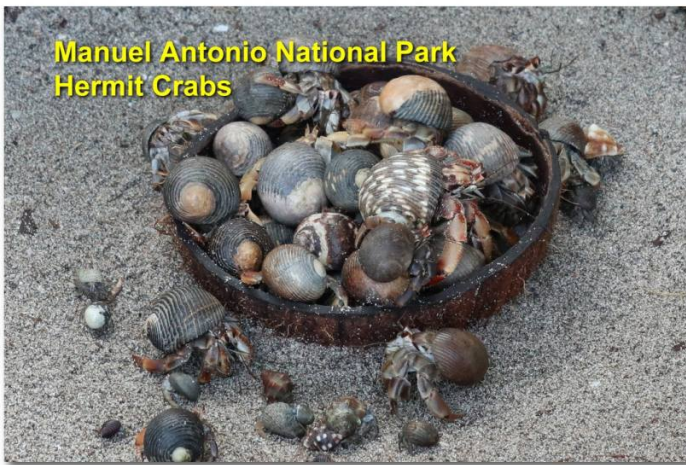
Manuel Antonio National Park
Cannot bring any food into park
Bags are inspected (health of wildlife)



Manuel Antonio National Park
Black Spiny Lizard



Manuel Antonio National Park



Most Important Places to Explore in Two Days in San Jose (My Opinion)

- Cathedral.
- Central Market.
- Gold Museum (incl Money Museum).
- Jade Museum.
- Museum of Costa Rican Art.
- National Museum.
- National Theatre.

*All are together in city
centre except art museum
1.6 miles from centre.*

Metropolitan Cathedral Catedral Metropolitana 1871



Metropolitan Cathedral - 1871



Central Park (Main Square) Parque Central de San José



Central Market



Central Market Tortilleria



Central Market - Queso



Central Market





Central Market - Bakery - Panadería



**Palace Theatre (Now Shopping)
1930s**



**Pre-Columbian Gold Museum
Underneath the Plaza de la Cultura
Curated by Central Bank of Costa Rica**

Pre-Columbian Gold Museum 3,567 Pre-Columbian artifacts

- 1,922 ceramic pieces.
- 1,586 gold objects.
- 59 stone, jade, glass objects

**The gold collection dates from
300 to 400 BC to 1550 AD.**

**All with very good explanations
of historical context.**

Pre-Columbian Gold Museum



Monkey Ocarina 300-800 AD



Armadillo-shaped Pot 800-1500 AD



5 lb Gold Nugget Found in CR



Gold Ornaments

Pre-Columbian Gold Museum



Gold Necklace



Gold Ornament



Cat 300-1000 AD



Incense Burner 800-1500 AD

Pre-Columbian Gold Museum



Gold Ornaments



Gold Ornaments



Bird-like Sculpture 300-800 AD



Bowl Tadpoles 300 BC 300 AD

Numismatic Museum With Gold Museum.

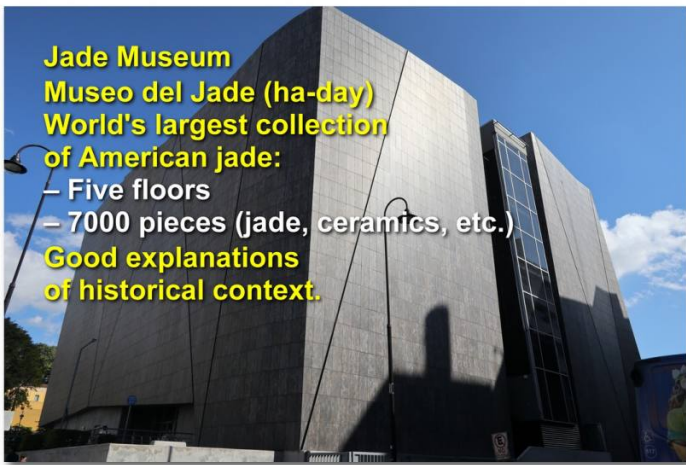
- 5,000 objects.
- Historical info.

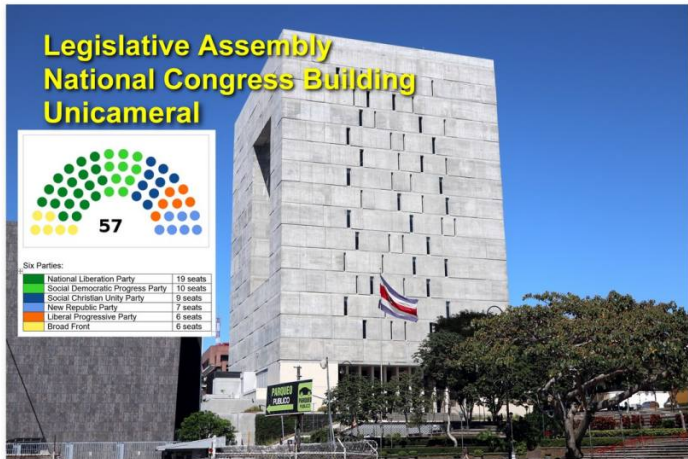


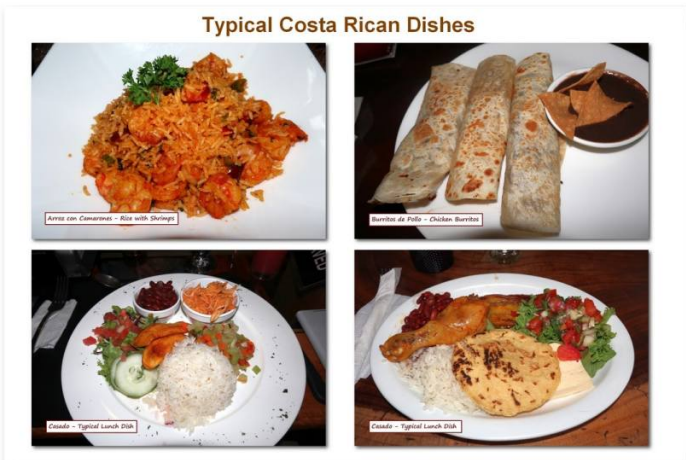
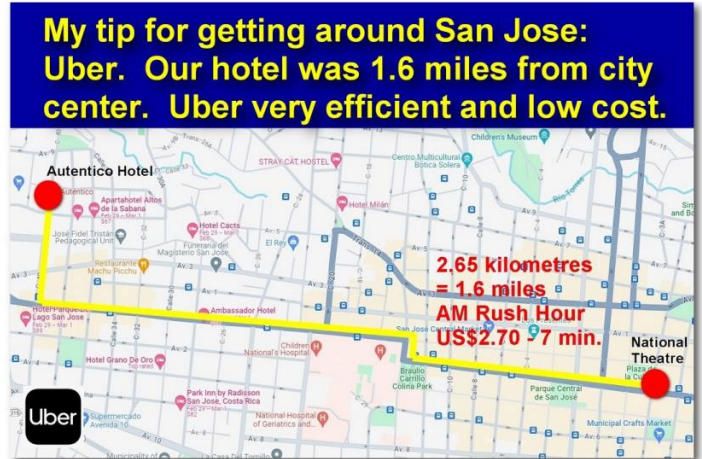
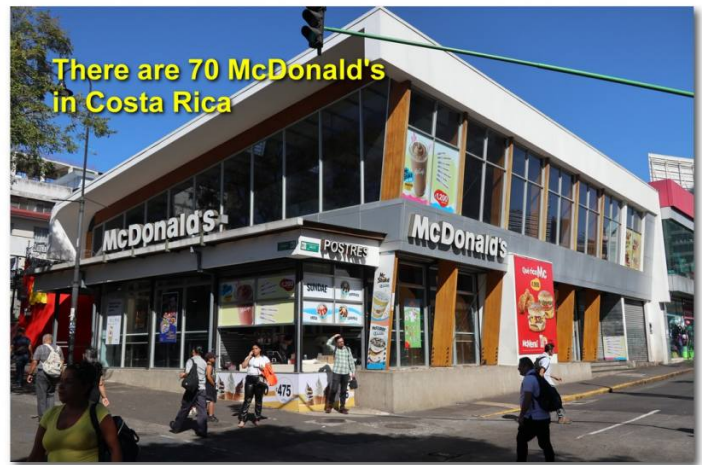
2 escudos, oro, 1843,
Costa Rica
2 Escudos, gold, 1843,
Costa Rica



1 onza, antimonio con baño
de níquel, 1850, Costa Rica
7 Onza, nickel-plated antimony,
1850, Costa Rica







Typical Costa Rican Dishes



Queso Blanco - White Cheese



Ropa Vieja con Frijoles, Arroz, Platanos



Sopa de Tortilla - Tortilla Soup



Sopa Negra - Black Bean Soup

Typical Costa Rican Dishes



Sweet Empanadas



Yagüa Casado



Empanadas de Maíz



Watermelon - Sandía

Juan Santamaría International Airport 12 Mi West of Downtown San Jose



The End (El Fin) Of Our Visit to Costa Rica

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