Tourist and Cultural Guide of
SOUTH GUANACASTE
Lowlands (Bajura)
10 things every tourist should see and do in South Guanacaste
(Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Hojancha & Nandayure)

1. Taste corn-based dishes
2. Attend a traditional riding of bulls
3. Birdwatching in Palo Verde National Park
4. Enjoy the sea and the sunsets
5. Acquire handicrafts from La Choreja, Guatil and Saint Vincent
6. Live the experience of rural tourism
7. Practice surf in Tamarindo
8. Watch the “arribada” of sea turtles in Ostional WR, Las Baulas NP & Camaronal

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Hojancha
Guanacaste is a province located in the far northwest of Costa Rica. One of its main characteristics is that, despite being the second-largest region of Costa Rica, it is the least populated. Only 326,953 people live in its extensive area of 10,140 km². The warmth of its people, magical forests, natural parks, picturesque beaches and a cultural richness worth experiencing await you there.

Geographically, Guanacaste can be divided into two parts. The northern and southern cantons, also known as the highlands and the lowlands, La Altura y La Bajura.

The Highlands (La Altura)
This area is traditionally associated with the cantons located along the Cordillera de Guanacaste and the Sierra Minera de Tilarán: La Cruz, Liberia, Bagaces, Cañas, Tilarán, Abangares.

The Lowlands (La Bajura)
This region is comprised of the cantons located in the Nicoya Peninsula: Carrillo, Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Hojancha, Nandayure.

This Cultural and Tourism Guide includes the cantons of Carrillo, Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Hojancha and Nandayure.

The origins of the province go back the indigenous people, who associated the land with its majestic elephant-ear trees, known more commonly as guanacaste trees. The name of the land thus comes from the tree that the indigenous peoples called Ka-Nacaztlán: its dense, fan-like foliage, the rounded shape of its canopy, and bearing dark, dry seed pods that look like ears – which is why common names for the species include monkey-ear tree and the elephant-ear tree.

The species, also called *Enterolobium cyclocarpum*, remains a common sight in the province, where it is one of the most precious symbols of the locals.

Manifestations of popular culture abound in the region, with traditions that mix indigenous and Spanish cultures, as well as an incredibly diverse mosaic of ecosystems that are well worth exploring. The Chorotega region offers a wide variety of natural environments, with common sights including primary forests, waterfalls, volcanoes, beaches, rivers and exuberant flora and fauna.

Places of cultural interest

The cultural activities and expressions of the region are particular to Guanacaste, including the lowlands or bajura. These include the symbolism of the cowboy of the savannahs, the sabanero, with traditions such as bull riding. The sabanero is also a key figure of activities around the Cristo Negro de Esquipulas in Santa Cruz and the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe accompanied by the well-known Dance of the Yegüita, in Nicoya, a mixture of indigenous and Catholic traditions.

Guanacaste Sur is known for its music, with local traditions including the marimba, guitar, quijongo and folk dances. Its customs include special prayers, the “Guanacaste shout”, festivals, processions, semi-improvised poems such as bombas and retahílas. Local crafts include a pottery tradition that is over 5000 years old, as well as contemporary crafts and masquerades. The community of Guaitil is famous for its artisans, who meticulously work with ceramics that give a new life to the pre-Columbian motifs of the Chorotega people.

These workers have become true virtuosos of their craft, with pieces that have become highly valued.
Likewise, the indigenous Matambú people are the only representatives of the Chorotega ethnic group in the country. Founded in 1980, the district of Matambú of the canton of Hojancha is located within this indigenous territory. There are tours that offer visitors an experience that mixes adventure, cuisine and handicrafts.

Guanacaste cuisine features corn as a main ingredient, used in tortillas, doughnuts, tanelas, chicheme, and much more. Modern, versatile seafood options play a central role in the culinary offerings, which include local and international dishes. The chefs of the region take advantage of the fresh ingredients available to create different, exquisite dishes. The local food scene has become international in its search for sensations and flavors.

Some of the most nutritious and exquisite foods that nature has to offer are obtained from the sea. Its diversity lends itself generously to the kitchen, where the most incredible, fine and delicious dishes are crafted. A single product can take countless forms by the time it reaches the table: appetizers, ceviches, cocktails and soups, as well as in main dishes such as fried fish, salads, and rice dishes with fish or shellfish.

The most important economic activities are cattle raising, artisanal fishing, and agriculture, including sugar cane cultivation and the use of the trapiche, or sugar mill. Corn, beans, coffee and rice are also grown.

The traditional towns of the region can be discovered in their sodas, small family restaurants or cafés where you can taste the cuisine of Guanacaste. Among all of its communities, Nicoya stands out for its traditional food and beverages.

Guanacaste architecture

Guanacaste architecture reflects the passage of time and presents a truly unique style and aesthetic throughout the province.

Some buildings have been converted into museums due to their historical value, with contents that evoke the remote or recent past, leaving observers with a curious sensation of nostalgia.

The city of Santa Cruz was declared a folkloric city of Costa Rica, precisely because of its strong roots in its local traditions. The city is famous for its colorful parties, delicious food and the rhythm of its folk music. The canton of Nicoya, meanwhile, is recognized as an eminently historical center, with testimonies to the past including the country’s oldest standing Catholic church.

The warm waters of Guanacaste

La costa de Guanacaste Sur es mundialmente conocida por su belleza The southern coast of Guanacaste is known around the world for its scenic beauty and for top-notch services that cater to even the most demanding tastes of tourists from Costa Rica and abroad.

Along the coastline of Guanacaste, there are numerous beaches bathed in the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean. The coastal scenery is exceptional. There are extensive white sand beaches, a calm sea with intense blues and a shore dappled with the shade of the widespread coconut palms.

Many of these beaches are part of protected areas because of the richness of their flora and fauna.

These beaches are located in the extreme south of the province of Guanacaste, in the cantons of Carrillo, Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Hojancha and Nandayure, with top choices including Playa Panama, Hermosa, del Coco, Ocotal, Pan de Azúcar, Potrero, Flamingo, Brasilito, Conchal, Grande, Tamarindo, Avellanas, Junquillal, Nosara, Garza, Guiones, Sámara, Carrillo, Islita, Corozalito, Bejuco and Coyote.

The diverse environments of these tropical paradises refresh the imagination of visitors who can choose between practicing beach sports such as surfing, jet skiing, sea canoeing or endless horseback riding.

The rivers of Guanacaste also offer ideal conditions for tourism, with abundant fishing and riverbeds that make it a breeze to traverse their bends and deltas that should be on every tourist's list.

The Tempisque is one of the most important rivers that Guanacaste has in the North Pacific region, running over 144 km and collecting all the waters that originate in the slope of the Gulf of Nicoya, into which it finally flows.

Protected areas

Other protected areas are also located in the area, such as Palo Verde National Park in the Tempisque lowlands, which is one of the most ecologically diverse places in its home canton of Bagaces; in terms of its bird fauna, it is nearly unparalleled in Costa Rica. The Las Baulas Marine National Park is
situated nearby, one of the most important nesting sites in the world for leatherback sea turtles. The leatherback is the largest known species of sea turtle. With its deep blue shell, it can measure up to 2 meters in length and can weigh up to 700 kg. Barra Honda National Park is the most prominent protected area of Nicoya, with a famous complex of caverns. In truth, the entire park is an inexhaustible source of natural wealth, offering sublime moments to contemplate the area’s scenic beauty.

Diriá National Park is located in Santa Cruz, playing a key role in protecting the region’s watersheds and around 1,500 ha of forest. Evergreen species predominate at altitudes of over 700 m, with plentiful mosses and giant bromelias.

Other important protected areas include the Lomas Barbudal Biological Reserve, where 130 species of birds have been identified, and Ostional National Wildlife Refuge to the north of Punta Guiones in the canton of Carrillo, no less incredible in terms of its wealth of natural beauty.

Ostional is particularly important because of its protection of marine species and aquatic birds. The flora consists of the trees of the tropical rainforest, with estuaries and mangroves in the southern part, especially those separating the beaches of Islita, Bejuco, San Miguel, Coyote and Guiones. Mangrove conservation has left the ecosystem in excellent shape, making it an ideal place to spot birds and other animals, as well as for leisurely sports like kayaking.

Camaronal National Wildlife Refuge is a wide and open beach, about three kilometers long and has moderate to strong waves. Towards its southern end is the mouth of the Río Ora, which can be crossed by wading carefully. The sector on the other side provides access to other beaches to the south (Islita, Bejuco, San Miguel) and north (Carrillo, Samara). Camaronal is known as a nesting site for leatherback and olive ridley turtles. The wildlife refuge here protects the sea turtles. The park is also suitable for camping and fishing.

Services and infrastructure

The attractions on offer here are diverse, with hotels boasting 2 to 5 stars, and numerous small and medium businesses with a commitment to quality, which offer lodging and thematic activities, restaurants and tour guides, travel agencies and transportation by land or water. It is said that southern Guanacaste has it all, drawing tourists from all over to visit the province and experience its attractions and activities.

Its efficient public transportation network and ferry terminals at Paquera and Playa Naranjo make it easy to travel around the region. Likewise, the bridge over the Río Tempisque makes it possible to get to the entire central and southern part of the peninsula quickly and conveniently.

It also has a series of airfields (Tamarindo, Carrillo, Islita) that allow quick and safe access to the main tourist destinations in southern Guanacaste.

Guanacaste Sur is one of the most developed regions, with quality tourism services. Tourists from Costa Rica and abroad are invited to relax, forget the stress and enjoy the sun and the beach. Experience the land of boyeros, sabaneros and bull riders. Savor food prepared in a wood stove, a clay oven. Guanacaste and its people await you with pleasure.
Información sobre empresas de la zona registradas por Ingresa a los siguientes enlaces y podrás encontrar características twang. El guácimo tree along with a jícara gourd and string to produce the instrument’s music played using an instrument of the same name, made from the wood of the Guácimo tree.

Folk dances make use of traditional music, clothing and choreography in order to express ideas or emotions. These colorful musicians, known as “dog scarers” often accompany the mascarada or montadores, bull trainers and vaqueros.

Breeding and herding Santa Cruz cattle is an important activity in the community. Breeding and herding Santa Cruz cattle is an important activity in the community. The waves and great scenic beauty stand out, which favors the practice of this sport.

Diving: a wonderful destination for diving lovers. The waves and great scenic beauty stand out, which favors the practice of this sport.

Restaurants, bars and hotel chains that stand out, which favors the practice of this sport.

Cultural heritage

Cultura - Enlace

Traditional crafts: a great variety of traditional crafts are found in the area. These crafts are part of the cultural heritage of the area and are passed down through generations.

Traditional building

Traditional building activities: traditional building is an activity that is part of an important festive ritual in Santa Cruz traditions. Buildings were traditionally constructed using natural materials such as wood, stone, and thatch. These materials were often sourced from the surrounding environment, which allowed for a strong connection to the land and a sustainable approach to construction.

Construction techniques: traditional construction techniques were used, such as the use of adobe bricks, which were made by mixing clay, sand, and water, and then sun-dried or fired in the sun. These techniques involved the use of local knowledge and experience, which allowed for the creation of buildings that were well suited to the local climate and environment.

Materials: traditional materials such as wood, stone, and thatch were used. Wood was often sourced from local trees such as the Palo Verde and Guácimo trees, while stone was commonly found in the area and used for foundations and decorative elements. Thatch was used for roofs and walls, providing insulation and protection from the elements.

Structural elements: traditional structural elements such as arches, vaults, and domes were used. These elements allowed for the creation of rooms with different functions, such as living spaces, kitchens, and bedrooms.

Decoration: traditional decoration was used to create a sense of unity and connection to the land. This included the use of natural materials, such as flowers and leaves, as well as the use of symbols and motifs that represented the local culture and traditions.

Buildings:

Traditional buildings included houses, workshops, and communal spaces. These buildings were not only used for shelter, but also served as important social and cultural hubs. The layout and design of these buildings were carefully planned, with consideration given to the orientation of the sun and the views.

Traditional buildings were not only practical, but were also works of art. The materials used, the craftsmanship, and the overall design all contributed to the creation of beautiful and functional structures. These buildings were often passed down through generations, serving as a link to the past and a reminder of the area’s rich cultural heritage.

Museums:

Museums are important institutions that help to preserve and showcase the cultural heritage of an area. They provide a space for people to learn about the history, traditions, and customs of their community. Museums can be found all over the area, each with its own unique collection.

Museums

The Museo de San Vicente and Museo San Blas are important cultural institutions in the area. They offer a glimpse into the area’s history and traditions, with exhibitions that showcase a variety of objects and artifacts. These museums are not only educational, but are also important spaces for community engagement and cultural exchange.

Directory of certified tourist guides

The directory of certified tourist guides is a valuable resource for visitors looking to discover the hidden gems of the area. It includes information about local guides who are knowledgeable about the area’s history, culture, and natural beauty. These guides can provide a unique perspective on the area, allowing visitors to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the local culture and traditions.

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Historic Architectural Heritage: Property declared to have historical and architectural value under Law 7555 on Historic Architectural Heritage

No podrás dejar de visitar estas obras de patrimonio arquitectónico

**Cultural heritage**

**Traditional crafts:** The traditional crafts found in the area include the Chorotega ceramics of Guadalupe and San Vicente de Nicoya, which are made with pure clay using traditional techniques of the Chorotega indigenous group that have been passed down through the generations.

**Museums:**

- **Museo de San Vicente**
  - El Museo de San Vicente en Nicoya lanza su primera exposición en 2017 con el propósito de presentar la historia, el arte y la creación de esta forma de cerámica.

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**Traveler tips:**

- **Artesanías:**
  - Las artesanías del área incluyen técnicas tradicionales que han sido pasadas de generación en generación.

- **Antigüedades:**
  - La antigüedades del área incluyen muebles antiguos y objetos de arte.

**Directory of certified tourist guides:**

- **Guías certificadas:**
  - La guía certificada de turismo es un recurso valioso para los visitantes que desean descubrir las joyas ocultadas de la zona.

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**South Guanacaste Cultural Agenda**

**JANUARY**

**SANTA CRUZ**
Second week of January: Santa Cruz Cultural Week (activities throughout the civic center).

January 13: Vigil of Santo Cristo de Esquipulas (in No Vejo de Arando).

January 14: Solemn Entrance of the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas (central temple)

January 15: Day of the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas

January 14-18: National Traditional Festivities in honor of the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas.

**FEBRUARY**

**NICOYA**

February 1: Entrance of the Saint (San Blas) and civic/patron saint festivities (San Blas church and surroundings).

February 3: Day of San Blas, patron saint of Nicoya (San Blas church and larguero).

**SANTA CRUZ**

February and March: Coyoleras are organized in Santa Cruz.

March to December: Villanuel Fiestas Patronales (Villareal Park).

**MARCH**

**SANTA CRUZ**

February and March: Coyoleras are organized in Santa Cruz.

March: Dance of Dust (in the bull ring of Villareal de Santa Cruz).

**HOJANCHA**

March 19: Day of San Blas in Hojancha in honor of the Virgen de Los Angeles.

March 31: Aroo in Huacas de Hojancha, in Celebration of Santa Rosa.

**APRIL**

**NICOYA**

April 1: Enterance of the Saint (San Blas).

April 14: Easter Sunday.

April 21: Holy Week (in La Cofradía).


April 24: Holy Week (in Villanuel).


April 26: Holy Week (in Villanuel).


April 29: Holy Week (in Villanuel).

April 30: Holy Week (in Villanuel).

**MAY**

**HOJANCHA**

May 1: Parade of Boyeros in Hojancha (parade, food, music and dance in the center of town).

**JUNE**

**NICOYA**

Week before July 25: National Cultural Festival of the Annexation.

**JULY**

**NICOYA**

Week before July 25: National Cultural Festival of the Annexation.

**SANTA CRUZ**

Second Saturday in December: Christmas Festival (artistic activities, food, crafts, parade and lights).

December 8: Immaculate Conception of Mary, patron saint of Matamoros (religious and cultural activities, turn, food and handicrafts).

**AUGUST**

**NICOYA**

August 1: The Cantadera de Días (in La Cofradía) begins.

August 11: Picada de Leña, tope, parade, and meals.


August 30: Mariña Day. Colegio Liceo Dismo de Nicoya.

**SEPTEMBER**

**NICOYA**

September 14: Lantern Parade and Arrival of the Lords.

September 15: Independence Day. Parades in all cantons.

**OCTOBER**

**SANTA CRUZ**

October 12: Day of San Blas, patron saint of Nicoya.

October 13: Victory of the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas.

October 14: Day of San Blas.

October 15: Solemn Entrance of the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas (San Blas church).

**NOVEMBER**

**NICOYA**

November 1: The Cantadera de Días (in La Cofradía) begins.

November 11: Picada de Leña, tope, parade, and meals.


**DECEMBER**

**NICOYA**

December 7: Anniversary of the Cantonato de Nicoya.

December 9: Atobada (in La Cofradía).

December 11: Vesperas of the celebration with Alborada, Pasada de la Virgen, La Salve and Serenata (in La Cofradía).

December 12: Feast of Our Lady Virgin of Guadalupe and Dance of the Yegüita, election of new positions in La Cofradía and candlelight procession.

Third Monday of each month: Peña Cultural Nicoyana.

**OTHER HANDICRAFTS**

The cantons of Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Hojancha and Nandayure share elements of their culture such as traditional foods, hand pressed tortillas, marimba music, and the intangible heritage of the Chorotega region. Pottery is one component of this cultural heritage, an ancient tradition that is carried out in Guaitil, San Vicente and Las Pucas de Nicoya, as well as San Pablo de Nandayure, where families have used red clay in their crafts, making domestic utensils such as nimbeerias, comales, jars, and more. However, this day does not work for objects made with cowries, because payments do not stick to them as in Guaitil and San Vicente. An example of this is Crafts Building a Legacy by the family of Claudia Rosales Perez, who have taken this legacy to the new generations such as her daughter Zemedia Rosales Rosales and other people through workshops and fairs. This tradition reveals part of our history and the province of the country and it is the identity of our canton.

**CONTACT PEOPLE:**

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**Traditional Crafts**

The traditional techniques practiced in the cantons of Santa Cruz and Nicoya include Chorotega ceramics, practiced in Guaitil de Santa Cruz and San Vicente de Nicoya by the Chorotega indigenous people. The figures are made from pure clay using traditional techniques passed down through the generations. There are also jicaro handicrafts, using a carving technique called “esgrafiado”, and leatherworking, with the production of hats, saddles and traditional clothes.

**Ecomuseum of Chorotega Ceramics San Vicente, Nicoya**

In order to preserve the history, designs and techniques of this pottery style, the Ecomuseum of Chorotega Ceramics of Nicoya inaugurated its permanent exhibition in 2017. This new room is the result of several years of research into oral history, design and museum installation, all carried out by the community itself with the support and advice of the Regional Museum Program of the National Museum of Costa Rica (MNCR) and the Network of Community Museums of America.

Take a little bit of the color and beauty of Santa Cruz and Nicoya back home with you!

**Collectivo artesanal La Choreja**

The catalog below contains a wealth of quality handicrafts from local artisans at excellent prices.

**Cultural Agenda • Handicrafts**

**SANTA CRUZ Y NICIOYA**

**LA CHOREJA HANDICRAFT COLLECTIVE**

The Colectivo Artesanal La Choreja is an organization of local artisans, whose name comes from the fruit of the monkey-ear tree, also called the guanacaste tree (Enterolobium cyclocarpum). In the Nahua language its name is Guatsuil Nacazti. With wide, imposing branches, it provides ample shade, and has given its name to the province of Guanacaste, home to a vibrant and rich cultural tradition. It has also been declared Costa Rica’s national tree.

Handicrafts made from its seeds are inspired by the rich culture of the Guanacaste plains, with their flora, fauna, beaches, gastronomy and sabanero tradition.

The La Choreja Collective was formed in 2019 through an assistance program of the Costa Rican Tourism Board as part of the Artesanías con Identidad Program of the Department of Tourism Development of the Directorate of Planning and Tourism Development. Its creation was part of a strategy aiming to ensure that tourists can enjoy the travel experience and take a unique product back with them, one that has been forged by the hands of Guanacaste’s local artisans, giving them a piece of the soul of this wonderful place.

**Other Handicrafts**

See catalog here

**La Choreja Collective**

The catalog below contains a wealth of quality handicrafts from local artisans at excellent prices.

**Take a little bit of the color and beauty of Santa Cruz and Nicoya back home with you!**

**Collectivo artesanal La Choreja**

The catalog below contains a wealth of quality handicrafts from local artisans at excellent prices.

**See catalog here**
Every year, during November and December, Nicoya celebrates the festivities of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which include different religious, cultural and secular activities. These include the contadera de días (counting of the days), the pica de leña (chopping of firewood), the atolada, the alza de la armada (raising of the arms), the alborada, the procesión de la pasada (Procession of the Passing), the Dressing of the Image of the Virgin, the atolada, the alza de la armada (raising of the arms), the pica de leña (chopping of firewood), the contadera de días (counting of the days), the pica de leña (chopping of firewood), the atolada, the alza de la armada (raising of the arms), the alborada, the procesión de la pasada (Procession of the Passing), the Dressing of the Image of the Virgin, and the processions carried out in the Nicoya region, starting with the arrival of the Spaniards in 1522.

The festivities begin on November 1, with the major celebration held annually on December 11 and 12. These festivities involve a centuries-old tradition inherited from the Chorotega ancestors, who recognized the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom they called La Señorita, as their patron saint. This followed the evangelization processes carried out in the Nicoya region, with the arrival of the Spaniards in 1522.

The organization won the 2019 Emilia Prieto Tugores Award for Intangible Cultural Heritage, for its complex organizational structure, which brings together various social actors, age groups and gives importance to the role of women at different levels, in addition to the centuries-long tradition of electing the members of the Cofradía, or Brotherhood.

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The popular dances are part of most of the canton’s patron saint festivities. Depending on the time and celebration, they may be accompanied by marimba or cimarrona music, or popular music groups. Likewise, these popular dances are used in Santa Cruz to organize the communities and collect funds. People are called together to report on important causes in the region, celebrate traditions and honor the outstanding inhabitants of the towns.

Some dances depict religious events, like the Dance of the Indians, a group of campesinos who give thanks to the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas during the cultural week of January. Or the dance of La Peseta, a tradition in the Santa Cruz district, where a space is created to bring together members of the community.

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The Punta Islita Open-Air Museum of Contemporary Art was created in 2003 from the first Meeting of Artists in 2002 who made more than 15 public works in houses, the forest, the community hall, town square and the Punta Islita Hotel. This museum seeks to develop an artistic language through a process with a group of approximately 50 local artists. This institution has a Museum House where various workshops and activities are held in San José in coordination with the Costa Rican Art Museum. The museum is currently a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Since 2002, under the direction of Loida Pretiz, the museum has promoted groups and workshops of artists who develop an artistic language with local identity. The Museo Islita gallery has held 10 to 15 exhibitions a year of local and guest artists, many of whom have conducted training workshops in the community. The museum has the virtue of being a region with a vast wealth of cultural traditions, with highly developed indigenous communities with Mayan and Aztec influences that went on to mix with Spaniards, who brought their own culinary traditions. The result is a combination of cultures for which the Costa Rican palate is very grateful.

The Museum House now exhibits his works of graffiti on recycled wood, jewelry with local materials such as seeds and shells, mobiles, mirrors made from logs left by the sea, nature landscapes engraved on second-hand fabric, lamps, soap dishes or coconut cutlery and ceramic pieces that tell the history of the Chorotega.

The Villafranca Zurcher Foundation (VC) has created the Islita Art Museum, a day center and the Creative Center, which teaches and promotes art, crafts and culture in the local community and the province of Guanacaste.

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Museo de arte Punta Islita

Guanacaste offers an unparalleled gastronomic experience, offering a memorable blend of smells, flavors and culinary practices that are based on the region’s cultural wealth.

Guanacaste has the virtue of being a region with a vast wealth of cultural traditions, with highly developed indigenous communities with Mayan and Aztec influences that went on to mix with Spaniards, who brought their own culinary traditions. The result is a combination of cultures for which the Costa Rican palate is very grateful.

Corn plays a central role as an ingredient in many foods. Some of the traditional foods that employ it include tamales, marquesote, atolillo, atolillo de arroz, atolillo morado, tamal asado, tamales, rosquillas, rosquillas bañadas, rice with corn, cajetas, cuajadas, tortillas, chorreadas, yoles de maíz tierno, cajetas, picadillos, empanadas and gallina en salsa.

The local beverages are generally made from the fruit-bearing plants of the region, including the guapinol, pitahaya, chestnut and cashew. Local favorites also include the lemony aguadulce, fresh pinolillo, horchata, mozote, leche de burra, chicha, coyol wine and resbaladera.

In addition, Guanacaste has been blessed with an extensive coastline, providing access to a rich range of seafood products, mainly harvested by artisanal fishermen and piangueros. This explains why many local dishes are based on fish and seafood from the region’s waters. Examples are fried fish, fish ceviches, shrimp, octopus and squid rings as well as shrimp with garlic, we have clear and cream shellfish soups, shellfish platters and rice dishes that include shrimp, squid, shellfish, and much more. A variety of turtle egg dishes are eaten in Ostional.

Wood stoves and traditional ovens play an important role in the local cuisine. These require an understanding of how to work with the different temperatures and cooking times, the best wood to burn in order to give the food the right flavor, and even the traditional brushes used to clean the ashes in the ovens.

The traditional towns of the region can be discovered in their sodas, small family restaurants or cafés where you can taste the cuisine of Guanacaste, in the cantons of Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Hojancha and Nandayure. The area also offers international cuisine, including gourmet restaurants.
Mercado Nicoa

Guanacaste cuisine

These foods from Guanacaste are not to be missed...

**CORN TORTILLAS**
Corn tortillas are a staple of many typical meals in Hispanic countries such as Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama.

**AYACO**
This dish is a fusion of beef broth, achiote, cornmeal, panela, bacon, fried ripe plantain, milk, quittería, lots of garlic, culantro coyote and the mandatory chicheme leaves.

**YOLES**
Yoltamal is an indigenous term that means a tender corn tamale. When the corn harvest begins, the first corn is cut at the bottom to preserve its leaves, which will be used to wrap the tamale. Tender leaves fold well, or they can be soaked in hot water and dried.

**ATOL DE PUJAGUA**
The term “pujagua” comes from the Nahuatl word puxauac, meaning soft or spongy. In Costa Rica there are different types of purple corn, one of which is the dark purple Congo variety. The color of the pujagua, meanwhile, is closer to pink.

**ARROZ DE MAÍZ**
From generation to generation, the recipe for arroz de maíz, whose name means “corn rice” but does not contain rice, has managed to stay alive as a symbol of pride in the Guanacaste culture.

**VINO DE COYOL**
Coyoleada is the process of extracting the sap from the coyol palm to make coyol wine. People known as “coyoleras” are the ones who understand the traditional extraction processes, tree growth and the ideal times and seasons.

**ROSQUILLAS Y TANELAS**
Cracked corn, dried cheese, egg and butter: these are the ingredients needed to make the famous doughnuts known as rosquillas. Tanela is a sweet bread made from corn stuffed with a panela, syrup and cheese.

A market where you can find traditional food from around Nicoya, with authentically Nicoyan homemade corn tortillas, bread, rosquillas and tanelas, not to mention delicious chicheme, one of our traditional drinks.

We have delicious local food and drinks for sale:

- Gallina achiotala
- Chilote stew
- Chicheme
- Arroz de maíz
- Picadillo de papa

Where: In front of the courthouse in downtown Nicoya, Province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica.

The Nicoa Market is open Monday through Saturday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and opens on Sundays during the high season. Telephone: 8331-1437

For more information about some of the places where you can eat these delicious dishes, click on the following links:

- Coopetortillas
- Fogón Típico Santa Cruceño
- Dulces Tradicionales

For further information and recipes:

- Recipes of the native seeds of Guanacaste
- Recipes of Puntarenas and Guanacaste

You can also enjoy these foods and beverages in popular sites like the markets of Liberia and Nicoya and in Santa Cruz at the famous Cooperativa de Mujeres.
Rural life in Guanacaste plays out in the communities that belong to the cantons of Carrillo, Santa Cruz, Nicoya and Nandayure, which are an expression of country living and a lifestyle that has been internationally recognized as promoting long lives. People here live from agriculture and ranching, keeping their culture alive. It’s a place of agroecological farms, rural communities and organizations that lead conservation, reforestation and agriculture projects. Learn about sustainable and efficient agricultural practices and hydroponic farming and enjoy a lunch prepared with locally grown produce.

Tourists can enjoy unique experiences that combine sun, warm water and waves, sea breeze and beautiful sunsets. Adrenaline-pumping activities on offer include fishing, snorkeling, diving, kayaking, surfing and rafting, as well as adventure activities such as tours to the Rincon de la Vieja Volcano, horseback riding, ziplining and hanging bridges. Or relax in the peace and quiet of the countryside, visiting to waterfalls, serpentariums, butterfly farms, ranches, hot springs, and mud huts. Savor authentic traditional cuisine that is true to its identity, enriched with the personalized touches of the region’s inhabitants.

Tourists who experience rural and community tourism enrich their vision of the world by supporting and strengthening the local economy and helping communities to preserve their identity, traditions, folklore, and the transmission of ancestral customs, which prevents emigration and allows for effective conservation of the environment.

Visitors to southern Guanacaste can spend time with people from the Santa Cruz communities of Guaitil and San Vicente de Nicoya, who make ancestral handicrafts such as pots, vases, comales arras and indigenous clay figures.

Try your hand at artisanal fishing, using the techniques of fishermen from the coastal region who capture commercial species like the weakfish, whitefin weakfish and Stoltzmann’s weakfish, along with sea bass and white shrimp, as well as mollusk harvesting.

The community of Bolsón is known for its lodging services in the Ortega and Bolsón houses, which offer tours of the Río Tempisque and Palo Verde National Park to observe crocodiles, birds and monkeys, among others. You can share experiences with families who welcome tourists into their homes.

Hojancha y Nandayure are two cantons with an extensive natural and cultural wealth. Their lifestyle and geographic features are some of the reasons why the Nicoya Peninsula has been identified as one of the world’s five blue zones with a uniquely high life expectancy, a distinction that has put them on the map and awakened the interest of the tourism sector.

Rural tourism offers an authentic experience that preserves the natural and cultural heritage of our villages. Spending time in a blue zone offers a special feel to the destination for both entrepreneurs and visitors.

Enjoy hiking and trekking, a tour of an orchid garden, a visit to the sugar mill and horseback riding in the mountains located in the highlands of the cantons of Hojancha and Nandayure, passing by viewpoints, historical sites and the highest waterfall in Central America while taking in the exuberant natural environment. Discover the unique aspects of Isliteño culture (in Punta Islita), including the arts, history, customs, cuisine, blue zone, native ingredients and more.

Islita is picturesque, popular natural destination in Guanacaste, which also boasts a colonial church with a bell tower and a lively artistic community.

As for tourist services, the region offers accommodations, restaurants, free private parking, outdoor pool and bar. Thematic activities and travel agencies will help you turn your dreams into reality.

Cattle raising and herding
Traditional fishing

This activity reflects a process of teaching and practice among family members who have learned from generation to generation, exchanging knowledge together with people from the community.

More information here

Production of panela using a trapiche sugar mill

In Santa Cruz, sugar millers work with traditional oxen-powered mills called trapiches, although there are also motor-powered mills, as in Arado. These people are also farmers, cattlemen and cowboys or sabaneros.

More information here

Oxherding and oxcarts

The traditional oxcart has been used in Costa Rica since the beginning of the 19th century, when they were used as a means of transportation and provided subsistence for many families.

More information here

Matambú indigenous territory

The indigenous territory of Matambú, the only territory of the Chorotega indigenous people, is located in the canton of Hojancha.

The Chorotegas were the largest pre-Columbian ethnic group in Costa Rica. Historically, they lived in the province of Guanacaste and part of Puntarenas. They went through a process of extensive miscegenation that is evident today in the current population of the Nicoya Peninsula; the dances, music and food are among the legacies of the indigenous people.

From their ancient customs they preserve the typical recipes, based on corn, the healing knowledge of many medicinal plants and the manufacture of pottery. This group does not keep its original language. Tours on Chorotega life are offered.

Matambú: How do you get there?

From San José you can take Route 27, turning off onto Highway 39 and Route 1 or simply take Route 1 from San José to Limonal. In Limonal, take Route 18 towards Puente de la Amistad, until it meets Route 21 towards Nicoya until the turnoff to Mansión on Route 158. Before arriving at Mansión, take the fork in the road leading to Matambú.

Comunidad indígena Matambú
Matambú Tours
Haga sus propias cerámicas

Cattle rearing and herding

The sabanero is one of the most iconic local figures, not only of the canton of Santa Cruz, but of the entire province, representing one of the most deeply rooted traditions of the Guanacaste identity. Sabaneros, the cowboys of the savannah, are mainly involved in caring for, transferring, taming and managing cattle and horses, intimately intertwined with the livestock rearing traditions of the cantons of Guanacaste.

More information here

El arreo Santacruceño
Manos a la Obra:
A tour to Villa Real market and cooking class (three local dishes prepared from food purchased at the market).
Duration of tour: half day.

Drinking Coyol:
This tour takes place in Nicoya, passing by the San Blas Church. Experience coyol wine in a 45 year old plantation. Traditional lunch is included.
Duration of tour: 7 hours.

Terruño Local Experiences

A local venture that aims to highlight the culinary and cultural traditions of the traditional towns of Guanacaste. Among its offerings are:

Manos a la Obra: A tour to Villa Real market and cooking class (three local dishes prepared from food purchased at the market).
Duration of tour: 2 hours. Includes beer and appetizer.

1, 2, 3 Cheese: See a goat farm at Rancho Avellanas. It is located approximately 12 km from Tamarindo and you can enjoy a traditional dish prepared with products from the farm. Duration of tour: 4 hours.

MCJ

The community of Santa Bárbara

Located about 45 km from Tamarindo, this community has preserved the essence of a typical Guanacaste town with its hamlets, customs, a cuisine that features non-GMO native corn, cow’s milk from pastures without agrochemicals, folk dances and marimba music, where the marimberos make their own instruments and delight in their music. A road in the community has been given the name Paseo de la Marimba, in recognition of the artisans who practice this art.

ICT

Guanacaste spectacle:
La Casona and Zanja Negra

This family project is aimed at preserving the traditions and culture of Guanacaste, offering a tour of a house over 100 years old that preserves some of the belongings of that time: leather beds, shears, tents, chamber pots, trunks, etc. In addition, there are demonstrations of tortillas and Chorotega pottery, as well as leather souvenirs from local enterprises run by women heads of household and folk dances with marimbas from the same community.

More information here

MCJ
The Diriá Coffee Tour is a tourism project of COOPEPILANGOSTA R.L. located in the canton of Hojancha, Guanacaste. This canton stands out as the leader in coffee cultivation in all of Guanacaste. Beaches such as Camaronal, Playa Carrillo and Playa Samara are located a few kilometers from the seat of the canton. Playa Carrillo, which is part of Hojancha, is considered one of the most beautiful beaches in the country.

Hojancha is known in Costa Rica as “the forest canton”, due to its long-standing practice of establishing, managing and using forest plantations. It also enjoys great national prestige because of the active participation and coordination of production and conservation activities on the part of the canton’s institutions. A good example of this is the creation and administration of the Monte Alto Natural Reserve.

Activities:  
• Guided coffee tour.  
• Cafeteria.  
• Folk dance group.  
• Local craftsmanship.  
• Guided tours of the community and nearby reserves.  
• Lodging in beautiful cabins in Hojancha.  
• Educational talks.  
• Model organic farm.

Nearby attractions:  
• Barra Honda National Park  
• Monte Alto Forest Reserve.  
• Matambú Indigenous Reserve.  
• Rio Nosara Tourist Center.  
• Playa Sámara  
• Playa Carrillo  
• Playa Nosara  
• Isla de Chira

Guaracaste occupies a privileged place in Costa Rica because of the richness of its beaches, making it possible for visitors to come to the coast as a means of recreation, sports and rest. These beaches feature a backdrop of tropical trees, natural spaces, and relatively low numbers of tourists.

This zone stands out for its variety of marine ecosystems and the multiple shades of its beaches, ideal for activities centered around nature and the ocean, including surfing, diving in clear water, basking in the sun and hiking along the coast.
The country’s beaches offer a wide variety of accommodation and opportunities to enjoy Costa Rican cuisine. The wide variety of hotels available for you to enjoy features options such as all-inclusive hotels, honeymoon hotels, eco resorts, family hotels, 5-star hotels, spa & wellness, and more.

The 5 most visited beaches in and around southern Guanacaste for surfing and “sun and beach” activities are:

- Playa Buena
- Playas del Coco
- Playa Monte del Barco
- Playa Negra
- Playa Panamá

Sunset Spots
One of the best in the entire Pacific

The morphology of the cliffs mixed with the tropical dry forest climate allows for multiple viewpoints that are accessible by vehicle in less than an hour’s drive. Some examples:

- Mirador de Tamarindo
- Mirador de Playa Grande
- Mirador de Playa Blanca

Playa Monte del Barco
This small beach is located between two points jutting out into the sea that shelter it and provide a beautiful environment ideal for resting and swimming. From the slopes and higher parts of the immediate hill, the Culebra Bay can be seen in all its splendor, especially during sunset. This beach has been awarded the Ecological Blue Flag, which identifies it as a clean and safe beach.

Playa Arenilla
Playa Arenilla, located in Papagayo, Guanacaste, is a place of golden sand with very soft waves, where the surrounding mountains give it a private and paradisiacal touch. The beach is quite clean and has just a few rocks. Arenilla is an ideal place to relax or enjoy a swim in its calm waters.

Playa Panamá
This wide bay with fine sand is surrounded by brazilwood, manchineel and mostrenco trees. It has a low swell, with a small mangrove swamp in the Rocha Estuary. The beach is very popular for swimming, resting, hiking and camping. It is frequented by families who like to take in the beauty of the maritime landscape that extends to the white beaches located on the other side of Culebra Bay.

Playa Hermosa
Located a few minutes away from El Coco, it is a much less frequently visited than its neighbor, remaining an attraction for those who are looking for some peace and quiet. With its light gray sand and only a few stones, it’s a beach for swimming in gentle waves, enjoying a walk or just lying under the palm trees that provide shade at the edge of the beach.

Playa Buena
There are plenty of reasons to visit Playa Buena in Papagayo. Right next to the Occidental Papagayo hotel, head down a 400 m cobblestone path, which will take you to a good-sized white sandy beach and turquoise sea, with trees on the shore that provide shade and barely perceptible waves. Just watch out for currents.
Playa Ocotal
This beach is located on an inlet bounded by hills, with grayish sands and low waves. It is ideal for swimming, sunbathing, and water sports such as diving and sport fishing that are offered at different points in the region. The high parts of the adjacent hills boast magnificent views of the entire Gulf of Papagayo. This beach has been awarded the Ecological Blue Flag. goplaya.cr/es/playa/ocotal

Playa Danta
Its scenic beauty can be appreciated from the entrance, when you cross a path with a small wooden bridge, just before entering this beach of light gray sand, soft waves and few stones. The place combines nature with crystal-clear water and lots of vegetation. From Playa Danta, you can see the Pitahayas and Santa Catalina Islands. The latter site, about nine kilometers away, is a favorite site among divers in this part of the coast. goplaya.cr/es/playa/danta

Playa Pan de Azúcar
A quiet beach with light gray sand, with intermediate swell and few stones. The scenery at Pan de Azúcar beach is extraordinary, as the Islas Catalina can be seen in the distance. It is an ideal place to relax, as the beach remains free from crowds. It belongs to the area known as Las Catalinas in Guanacaste. goplaya.cr/es/playa/pan-de-azucar

Playa Potrero
Potrero occupies a bay with calm waters that is about four kilometers in length. Its beautiful landscape boasts both estuaries and mangroves. Towards the southern end is the Flamingo (Blanca) marina. The beach is ideal for swimming, sunbathing, hiking, horseback riding and the water sports that are organized from this site, including sport fishing and diving. goplaya.cr/es/playa/potrero

Playa Blanca (Flamingo)
Located on an inlet with moderate waves, it’s a great beach for swimming. It has a mangrove swamp as well as Isla Plata and Punta Salinas to the north. These islands separate Brasilito and Potrero Bays. From this point, you can enjoy a spectacular view of both bays. Its scenic and natural beauty, along with a variety of excellent services, make it an ideal option for those who wish to enjoy the beach during the day and have fun at night. goplaya.cr/es/playa/blanca

Playa Guacamayita
A popular Guanacaste beach that stands out for its light gray sand, few stones and moderate waves. Although it is often visited by tourists, Brasilito still retains its small-town essence, with farmhouses and the town soccer field just a few meters from the beach. goplaya.cr/es/playa/guacamayita

Playa Brasilito
This inlet, less than 2 kilometers long, owes its name to the millions of shell fragments that make up the northern part of the sandy beach, as concha is the Spanish word for shell. It has lush vegetation and a mangrove swamp and its waters are crystal clear. It is one of the most beautiful beaches in the country and is ideal for swimming, hiking, horseback riding, boating and other water sports, including scuba diving. This beach has been awarded the Ecological Blue Flag. goplaya.cr/es/playa/brasilito

Playa Conchal
Playa Conchal is a special natural attraction that is about nine kilometers away, is a favorite site among divers in this part of the coast. goplaya.cr/es/playa/conchal

Playa Real
Playa Real forms a single coastal unit together with the beaches of El Roble (to the south) and Nombre de Jesús (to the north), with the first two separated from the third by Punta Real. These beaches have light-colored sands with a combined length of two kilometers. The beautiful coastal landscape is complemented by the presence of several islets and rocky points that enhance its scenery. It has mild to moderate waves and is very suitable for swimming, hiking and other activities such as sea kayaking. goplaya.cr/es/playa/real-guanacaste
Playa Roble
Situated near Conchal in Guanacaste, in the area known as the Bay of Pirates, Roble is a beautiful white sand beach with few waves.

The turquoise color of the water stands out because of the huge stones that adorn the bottom of the sea, creating an extraordinary landscape. At the edge of the beach, the trees provide shade.

Playa Honda
Playa Honda, located in the Bay of Pirates, is an untouched spot that has been highlighted in recent years as a nesting site for black turtles. To reach this beautiful white sand beach with moderate waves and crystal-clear water, you must cross a dirt road on foot and then along a narrow path until you reach the entrance to the beach.

Playa Azul - Jurel
Olive-black and blackish-gray sand beach, with navy-blue waters. This bay type beach extends over a length of 177 m, representing little danger for bathers at low tide. Rich vegetation grows along its coastline with excellent countryside scenery. It has a dock and is an anchorage for boats.

The beach is primarily used for fishing tours.

Playa Nombre de Jesús
Playa Nombre de Jesús is located near the Bay of Pirates, but closer to Playa Minas, up the mountain. It is a hidden-away beach that lends itself to surfing.

Playa Potrero
Potrero offers tranquility, peace and a clean gray sand beach with moderate waves. The beach has very few stones, making it perfect for a dip or a walk along the sand, taking in the huge mountains that can be seen in the distance.

In a bay with calm waters, it also has picture-perfect estuaries and mangroves. Suitable for relaxing, admiring the scenery, and for water sports such as sport fishing, scuba diving and snorkeling.

Playa Calzón de Pobre
Playa Calzón de Pobre is just as peculiar as its name, which means “poor man’s underwear”. It is a small spot located in Carrillo, Guanacaste, but it has everything you need to relax: white sand, crystal clear water, gentle waves and few rocks. Before entering the site, a security guard will ask you for your information, part of the protocol for a tourism complex that is being built nearby.

Playa Matapalo
Playa Matapalo is located in Sardinal de Guanacaste, one of Costa Rica’s few five-star Blue Flag beaches. This spot offers grey sand and crystal-clear water. The sea is calm, perfect for taking a dip with the family. There is not much vegetation or shade around it.

Playa Zapotal
This beautiful light gray sand beach and calm waters is situated away from the noise of the city. It is ideal for a relaxing vacation.

Playa Pitahaya
Pitahaya is a pristine beach with gray sand. Despite its beauty, it remains off the beaten path for tourists. Its intermediate swell will allow you to swim and enjoy its crystal-clear water. Be careful because this beach has a lot of stones, both on shore and on the seabed.

Its great natural wealth includes cliffs that look out over the scenic beauty, steep rocks and streams. It is suitable for bathing, camping and photography.

Playa Concava
A huge boulder divides Playa Pitahaya from Playa Cóncava, but the beaches on either side of this natural dividing line are quite different from one another.

Playa Cóncava in Guanacaste has black sand, unlike its neighbor, which has light sand.

It is characterized by its strong waves and huge rocks that adorn the landscape. The dark sand intermingles with the rocks, wearing sandals is recommended on this solitary beach.

Its main attraction is the nesting season of the olive ridley turtle, but it is also ideal for swimming at low tide and hiking.
Playa Tamarindo

Together with Playa Grande and Ventanas, Playa Tamarindo is located on Tamarindo Bay. It is a beautiful beach that also has rocky areas and an island (Capitán) at its southern end. It has lush vegetation: therosy trumpet tree or roble de sabana, as well as tamarind and coconut trees. The surrounding area offers a variety of excellent services that allow you to enjoy the sea during the day and have fun at night. This beach is ideal for relaxation, hiking and horseback riding, not to mention sport fishing and diving tours, as well as visiting the mangrove swamp and observing turtle nesting. The prime surfing spots on this part of the coast are located in this bay and extending southward. This beach has been awarded the Ecological Blue Flag, which identifies it as a clean and safe beach.

It combines white sand, good waves for surfing and an incredible landscape surrounded by mountains. Here, you can sit under the trees to rest, take a walk or enjoy the incredible sunsets. Tamarindo is a great meeting point for a variety of different activities. It is close to Las Baulas National Marine Park where you can enjoy turtle nesting and beaches such as Playa Negra, popular with surfers. It has another advantage: the town of Tamarindo offers all kinds of services.

Playa Grande

This beach of white sand, few rocks and lots of vegetation receives waves of leatherback turtles year after year, in an incredible spectacle enjoyed by many visitors. Playa Grande belongs to Las Baulas National Marine Park, a protected area to which the beaches of Ventanas, Langosta and Carbón also belong. It is very popular with surfers for its huge waves, and offers options for hiking, swimming and sunbathing. The hours of access are restricted.

Playa Ventanas

Situated on an inlet marked by rocky promontories, with great sunbathing, swimming, relaxation and hiking options. Ventanas is located within Las Baulas National Marine Park, offering a white sand beach, few rocks, strong waves and a landscape surrounded by mountains. This incredibly beautiful beach is ideal for relaxation, but it also has an additional attraction: leatherback turtle nesting at certain times of the year.

Playa Punta del Madero

A white sand and stone beach with strong waves. At high tide, some natural pools are formed between the rock formations. At Punta del Madero, the trees provide shade on the shore of the beach. The beach is far from the crowds, ideal for tourists who wish to sunbathe in peace.

Playa Avellana

Playa Avellanas in Santa Cruz de Guanacaste is one of the most popular spots in Costa Rica. It’s the backdrop to hundreds of selfies taken by tourists. One favorite location for these vacation snaps is the iconic wooden bridge surrounded by dry branches. Avellanas is a white sand beach with shade trees along the shore. It also stands out for its waves, which make it a favorite spot for surfers, from beginners to experts.

Playa Negra

Playa Negra is considered one of the best surfing beaches in Costa Rica. Its waves receive dozens of intermediate to advanced surfers every day. Despite its name, meaning “Black Beach”, Playa Negra has white sand with lots of rocks on the sides. It is a perfect location in Santa Cruz de Guanacaste for a hike or just to sit under the shade of a tree and relax. You must walk along a short trail before visiting the beach.

Playa Junquillal

Junquillal is a special destination that combines big waves that draw surfers from near and far with the jungle sounds of the howler monkeys that live in the area. This beach has gray sand and has few stones. The beautiful sunsets are part of the attraction of Playa Junquillal.
Playa Azul
Azul is a quiet beach with black sand and gentle waves, located within the Bahía Pez Vela Resort. This beach is kept very clean and is surrounded by trees. At Playa Azul, you can see the wonders hidden among the rocks that adorn the seabed while snorkeling. The beach lives up to its name, "Blue Beach", with the blue sky reflecting in the wet, dark sand of the beach.

Playa San Juanillo
Playa San Juanillo has white sand, turquoise water, gentle waves and many rock formations. You are sure to notice that the beach is divided in two by a sandbank, in both sectors you can swim and snorkel in the natural pools near the shore, formed between the rocks.

Playa Ostional
Hundreds of olive ridley turtles arrive on the beach to lay their eggs in Playa Ostional. Groups of turtles may arrive on up to 10 different occasions throughout the year, but mass arrivals usually occur during the months of June, August, September, October and November. Turtles are the main attraction on this gray sand beach with strong waves and few rocks.

Playa Guiones
In Nosara, Guanacaste, Playa Guiones is well-known as an ideal place for surfers. This white sand beach has few stones is a top destination, regularly seeing dozens of visitors, making it the busiest beach in the Nosara area. Despite its popularity, this area is extremely peaceful and quiet. It is a site of enormous natural beauty. Not many people know this, but Playa Guiones belongs to the Ostional Wildlife Refuge, the nesting site of olive ridley turtles.

Playa Garza
The white color of the sand and the palm trees that surround the beach make it a special place. Garza, located in the Nosara sector of Guanacaste, is a stony beach that usually receives visits from experienced surfers. It has moderate waves and a mangrove swamp. A small fishing village is located nearby as well as Playa Guiones, famous for the color of its sand.

Playa Buena Vista
Buena Vista has moderate waves and lots of vegetation, as well as a small estuary. Because of its steep slopes, it’s a popular spot for ultralight trips. It is located 4 km northwest of Sámara. Because of the road conditions, a four-wheel drive vehicle is required.

Playa Barrigona
To get to Playa Barrigona, a few kilometers from Sámara, you have to cross a very poorly maintained road. But the destination is worth it: a picture-perfect beach with some of the best sunsets, crystal-clear water and good waves, which attracts more and more surfers. It is on this white sand beach that actor Mel Gibson decided to build his huge mansion.

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Playa Cuarzo
Cuarzo, also known as Pink Beach (Playa Rosada), stands out because its white sand has a slight pinkish tone due to the small, powdery shells that shine in the sun. It is a pristine beach with gentle waves located in Nosara, Guanacaste. Its name comes from the shiny quartz stones that can be found while walking on the sand. It has lots of rocks and crystal-clear water, a perfect place for snorkeling.

Playa Pelada
Picture-perfect Pelada is located in the Nosara sector of Guanacaste. This white sand beach has strong waves, making it a popular spot for surfers. Tranquility and peace prevail on this beach. It is less visited than its popular neighbor, Guiones. In Pelada you can snorkel or hike along the beach while admiring the surrounding mountains. It is also popular for sunbathing, horseback riding, sport fishing and snorkeling, due to its clear waters.

Playa Sámara
One of the most extensive beaches of Guanacaste. Its coastline stretches on for almost 4 km. It has moderate waves and lots of vegetation. It is a perfect beach for kayaking, hiking, horseback riding, enjoying its waters, biking and sunbathing. It offers a variety of tourist services, which makes it a very popular beach for visitors. Since the waves are small, swimming is also a great option. The site is very developed, but the white sandy beach with few stones is kept very clean.

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Carrillo is 34 km from the center of Hojancha, on the Hojancha-Lajas-Santa Marta-Estrada Rávago leg of Route 160. It stretches over 3 km, close to large hotel developments by international companies. Carrillo is a white sand beach with few rocks. It is an ideal place to rest, sunbathe, or enjoy a walk. Over time, it has become an ideal place for swimmers due to its gentle waves.

Playa Puerto Carrillo

Carrillo combines gray sand with loose stones and beautiful sunsets. This site is part of the Camaronal Wildlife Refuge, 7 km from Samara. Here, you can practice surfing. The beach remains an oasis away from the crowds. A wide beach with moderate to strong waves, it is famous as a nesting site for leatherback and olive ridley turtles. The park is also suitable for camping and fishing. It stretches over approximately 3 km.

Playa Camaronal

Carbón is one of the four beaches that belong to Las Baulas National Marine Park in Guanacaste. To get there, you have to cross a jungle trail from Playa Ventanas. The color of the sand perfectly reflects its name, which means “Coal Beach”, since it combines black and white sand for a very marked contrast. This stony beach is difficult to access beach and its waves are strong. It is part of Las Baulas National Park.

Playa Carbón

Playa Coyote

In Coyote you can still feel the essence of the Guanacaste of yesteryear, with small houses surrounding the beach and a beautiful and simple town. The beautiful gray sand beach is its main attraction. On the beach the swell is moderate, and near the coast you can find some palm trees that provide shade. Due to its large size, the swell can differ in particular spots along the beach.

Playa Bejuco

Bejuco is a beach with grayish sand and moderate to strong waves. It also has a mangrove swamp that extends to the mouth of the Río Bejuco. Considered one of the most beautiful and environmentally pristine beaches of Guanacaste, Bejuco has become a reference for tourists, from Costa Rica and abroad, since its crystal-clear waters and reddish sands offer the perfect combination for a few days of disconnecting and relaxation.

Playa San Miguel

San Miguel is a beach with light gray sand, strong waves and few rocks located in the canton of Nandayure in Guanacaste. Because it is so large and secluded, it is perfect for quiet relaxation or a hike. San Miguel is located near the popular Playa Coyote, though it is much less crowded.

Playa Ario

A secluded gray sand beach that belongs to the Caletas-Ario Wildlife Refuge. It is a quiet place, where you can enjoy the sound of the birds that come out to fish every morning. You can also hike or sunbathe in total solitude. Ario has an intermediate swell and few rocks. This beach is noteworthy as a nesting site for olive ridley turtles.

Playa Caletas

Playa Caletas is known as Costa Rica’s hidden treasure and is a wonderful sandy beach. Because it is relatively isolated, traveling here can be a bit difficult, since the dirt roads are rough and extremely difficult to navigate during the rainy season. However, once you arrive, you will find yourself in a little piece of paradise on earth.

Playa Bongo

This extensive beach is located south of Playa Coyote. It is open and several kilometers long. Caletas Sector is located towards the north end, an ideal spot for surfing. Five kilometers to the south of Caletas Sector is the mouth and estuary of the Río Bongo, whose course marks the boundary between the provinces of Guanacaste and Puntarenas.

Playa Islita

A crescent-shaped inlet with calm waters and two estuaries. Here, visitors can enjoy clean water, hiking, sunbathing, horseback riding, mountain biking, 4x4 and quad tours, boat rides, sport fishing and scuba diving. Although the number of tourists has been growing, it is still not very crowded compared to many other beaches in Guanacaste.

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This is one of the most requested ecotourism activities for both newcomers to ecotourism in Costa Rica and experienced travelers. Guanacaste and its protected areas have a very diverse flora and fauna with numerous species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects, plants and fungi.

A boat safari lasting approximately two hours on the Río Tempisque, along the border of the Palo Verde National Park to see a great variety of wildlife such as iguanas, crocodiles, monkeys and many species of birds.

Palo Verde National Park
Palo Verde National Park is the most important nesting, mating and feeding site for resident and migratory birds in Costa Rica. This adventure will allow a peek into the incredible diversity of species such as monkeys, iguanas and crocodiles on a boat ride.

Barra Honda
Barra Honda is the largest known cave system in the country.

The geology of Cerro Barra Honda, a mountain 300 meters tall, is a reef-type limestone, meaning that it was once a system of reefs that emerged from the sea due to a upswell in the tectonic plates some 60 million years ago.
Rincón de la Vieja

The best combination of full day adventures at Rincón de la Vieja Volcano including ziplining, horseback riding, tubing down the river, a full buffet lunch, hot springs and a volcanic mud bath.

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Enjoy an educational experience like no other as you witness a beautiful phenomenon that occurs in Playa Ostional and Playa Grande, where olive ridley and leatherback turtles perform their nesting process under the moon and stars. You will be able to observe the process while a local certified guide will lead you to the nesting turtles and explain all the relevant information. You can also observe how the leatherback turtle, the world’s largest sea turtle, returns to the beaches of Costa Rica to bury its eggs in the sand.

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If you want to see the truly unspoiled and secluded beaches our Guanacaste has to offer, this is the tour for you!

Humpback whales

Board a boat to explore Playa Sámara area on this guided tour. Home to bottlenose and spotted dolphins, the crystal-clear waters are also a migratory route for the humpback whales that head south at certain times of the year. After the dolphin watching, explore the underwater marine life on your own with snorkeling equipment.

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If you are looking for a relaxing evening, join us for a sunset adventure along the coast with drinks, snacks, music and lights. Our guides are ready to show off their best dance moves.

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Sailing along the beautiful beaches of Carrillo awakens all the senses, allowing you to enjoy the wildlife, the beautiful scenery and the majestic Pacific Ocean. If you are lucky, you will be able to observe sea turtles, dolphins, fish and birds. Enjoy some time diving and exploring hidden beaches. You choose the timing: sunset or sunrise. No matter what time you visit, you will be delighted.

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Get a privileged and refreshing view of the Tigre, Malanoche and Belen waterfalls.

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Sea turtle nesting
Las Baulas National Park and Playa Ostional

Dolphin watching and snorkeling by catamaran
(Camaronal)

Seasonal: July to November
An unforgettable adventure for all ages! This nighttime experience takes place at nearby Playa Camaronal, where you will look for turtles as they peacefully emerge from the ocean. Your guide will use a special red light to avoid bothering the turtles. Made possible by Hotel Punta Islita in partnership with the Costa Rican Ministry of Environment and conservation NGOs.

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Sea turtle watching
(Camaronal)
If you’re looking to enjoy the tropical dry forest, mangrove swamps, wetlands and the cool and refreshing air of the mountains of Guanacaste, Palo Verde National Park is one of the largest in the province, though there are many others where you can enjoy this activity. You will be able to observe an incredible variety of birds, since Central America is an important stop on the migration routes of many bird species. Some of the birds that can be seen are the antbirds, kinglets, tanagers, toucans, motmots and nuthatches. Tours are guided by specialists who will help you spot these beautiful, hard-to-find creatures by listening to their distinctive songs.

A beautiful safari boat ride in Las Baulas National Park, Playa Grande. We will take you on a two-hour boat ride through the mangroves to see the beauty of Costa Rica’s natural bounty.

The Fundación Monkey Park is a wildlife support center that provides:
1. Rehabilitation and release of animals.
2. A home for animals that cannot be released.
3. Volunteer program for Costa Ricans and foreigners.
4. The option for tourists to sponsor the upkeep of animals.

Due to the climatic conditions of Guanacaste, the richness of the flora and fauna as well as the varied natural, cultural and architectural landscapes, photography is one of the most popular activities for tourists.

A 20-minute drive south of Tamarindo, you will find world-class golf courses at the JW Marriott Costa Rica in Guanacaste. One of the most beautiful golf courses in all of Costa Rica. Hacienda Pinilla’s greens offer challenging play and some of the best golf holes and views in Latin America.
The Islita Art Museum and community art associations vividly reflect the region’s intense character and passion for color and form. This activity pairs you with local groups to create a signature piece and unique souvenir of your visit. Embroidered collages, refined cell phone cases, rustic sand candles, handmade paper and jewelry are some of the projects that will delight your inner artist.

The traditional towns of the region can be discovered in their sodas, small family restaurants or cafés where you can taste the cuisine of Guanacaste. Among all of its communities, Nicoya stands out for its traditional food and beverages. Santa Cruz and Nicoya are particularly famous for their sites and buildings of architectural and historical interest, along with national monuments that are considered must-sees.

Throughout the year, the region’s communities celebrate occasions of historical, religious, sports, civic or artistic importance.

The handicrafts produced in Guaitil de Santa Cruz and San Vicente de Nicoya by the Chorotega indigenous people, who use pure clay and traditional techniques passed down through the generations. The products they make include decorations, vases, flowerpots, plates, ocarinas and more. They are sought after for their fine finish and can be purchased in various places throughout Guanacaste. There are also other handicrafts made using jícaras or the thipa plant, used in the preparation of various paper products. Handicrafts with Costa Rican identity are also available from the La Choreja collective.

Food tasting

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Tour of architectural and historical sites

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Taking part in cultural activities

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Purchasing handicrafts

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The Islas Catalinas dive tour starts at 6:50 a.m. at our dive center where we store the equipment. There, we took a few minutes to check the sizes and got on board (our boat is moored in Tamarindo).

After 45 minutes of sailing, we’ll arrive at one of the most incredible and places for diving and snorkeling: the Islas Catalinas.

Here, we will have the opportunity to see lots of marine life such as turtles, rays, sharks, manta rays and much more!

After the first dive, we can relax in our boat, eat some snacks, fruits and drink some juice or water. During this time, the boat will take us to our next spot, where, 45 minutes later, we can go back in the water!

We’ll dive for the second time and then it will be time to come back. While we sail along, some of our marine friends like turtles, dolphins and whales may approach us! We’ll return to Tamarindo at 12 p.m.

Important information

The Islas Catalinas are excellent sites for admiring underwater life that is difficult to find elsewhere. They are one of the best destinations for diving in Costa Rica.

It is possible to observe the giant oceanic manta ray from December to May. As well as other species of rays, sharks, puffer fish, moray eels, catfish, turtles, dolphins, and more.

The best conditions for diving tend to be between May and November, when it is common to enjoy visibility of 35 feet to 80 feet.

Water temperatures in Costa Rica are warm throughout the year, though they are highest between May and October and lowest between December and March.

More information

tamarindodiving
www.visitcostarica.com

Costa Rica is very different from other diving destinations. This is because our plankton-rich waters attract an abundance of marine life. Local dive sites (over 20 different sites) team with shoals of many species of fish, as well as rays, whitetip reef sharks, eels, octopus, seahorses, mantis shrimp, frogfishes and more.

Snorkeling

Beneath the surface of the sea lies a world full of life and color, with a diversity of marine flora and fauna. If you want to discover its beauty, just put on a diving mask, a snorkel and a pair of flippers to start exploring the seabed. Enjoy snorkeling among schools of colorful coral fish, eels, corals, rays and much more. Guanacaste and its dry climate create a perfect setting for fun snorkeling and scuba diving along its rugged and spectacular coastline. This activity is offered in several areas, including: Playa Tamarindo, Playa Conchal, Playa Brasilito, Playa Flamingo, Playa Potrero, Santa Elena and the Islas Catalinas, where you will be able to spot dolphins, sea turtles, whales and more. Don’t miss this incredible morning excursion.

River Kayak

A kayak tour on the Río Ora, observing of a variety of wildlife species such as monkeys, iguanas, frogs, snakes and birds.

Suitable for all ages, duration of three and a half hours. Includes transportation from the hotel, fruits, beverages and a bilingual guide.
Surf

Surf the best spots in Guanacaste, like the world-famous Witch’s Rock (Roca de Bruja), which has a reputation for offering unbeatable, adrenaline-filled waves. Enjoy the magical long waves and barrels. At Ollie’s Point, you will be able to enjoy the perfect combination of a break. This country offers visitors waves and take advantage of a right point. At Ollie’s Point, you will be able to enjoy the magical long waves and barrels. Enjoy the view of Tamarindo while paddling towards Isla Capitán. Once you arrive at the island, you will snorkel to enjoy the colors of the water and observe the marine biodiversity and the endless beautiful beaches. It is also famous for its pristine rocky coastline covered by the dry forest and rainforest come together, adventure begins where the beauty of the Pacific Ocean. SUP is a perfect option for seeing the region in a more laid-back way. You control the experience, whether it's rigorous training or taking it easy, spending a while watching the infinite rigorous training or taking it easy, spending a while watching the infinite...
For the more adventurous, you can spend the day exploring the Rincón de La Vieja Volcano on foot, which rises majestically 6,284 feet above a 34,800-acre park and is home to more than 250 species of birds including keel-billed toucans and blue-crowned motmots, ocelots, sloths, jaguars, tapirs, coatis and of course monkeys. You can also visit the Volcán Tenorio National Park, which is an excellent opportunity to see a beautiful region with incomparable scenic beauty.

Explore Costa Rica with all the adrenaline of your own ATV, while driving through rough roads that are full of excitement, allowing you to see Guanacaste in a different way. The tours have all the necessary safety measures in place to make your experience safe and fun, and the perfect opportunity for a family adventure. The region has impressive biodiversity, with options to observe different types of birds, butterflies, monkeys, and more.

Get in touch with your inner cowboy as you take in the sights of Guanacaste mounted on a well-cared for and highly trained horse. During the tour, your guide will tell you about the local wildlife and nature; you may also have the opportunity to see various species of iguanas, birds, butterflies, monkeys and more.

Start your day with adrenaline as you fly through the woods of Guanacaste, safely suspended and traveling between platforms. Observe the scenic beauty of the forests as you pass through the treetops, while taking in the incredible variety of biodiversity in the area. Many courses provide additional options like the Tarzan Swing and Superman ziplines, as well as hanging bridges – not to be missed!

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This is a wonderful experience that will show you the essence of Costa Rica and its natural and cultural richness through authentic experiences on the slopes of the Rincón de la Vieja Volcano. Experience exhilarating horseback rides and get ready for the Buena Vista ziplining tour, which takes you through the transitional rainforest to a series of treetop platforms, ziplines and suspension bridges. Next, head on a thrilling ride down the 420-meter-long water slide that winds its way through to the rainforest floor and ends in a freshwater pool. During all these activities, enjoy the flora and fauna of Costa Rica that comes alive in the jungle.

You can walk along Río Celeste, one of the park’s treasures.

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You can walk along Río Celeste, one of the park’s treasures.
Tour of the Hacienda Guachipelin on Rincón de la Vieja

The tour takes place in a unique property located in the surroundings of the Rincón de la Vieja Volcano. First, you will tour the farm on horseback, crossing various trails and rivers, while observing the surrounding flora and fauna. Then, get ready for an adrenaline rush on a tubing adventure, as you float downstream with the rapids of the Río Negro. After a delicious lunch, the excitement returns with a ziplining and rappel tour through the Río Negro canyon. To finish, relax in a rustic spa amidst the natural volcanic hot springs, steam baths and mud baths, which will calm and cleanse your skin.

Natural wonders of Bijagua

Hike through a pristine protected rainforest reserve with over 5 miles of private hiking trails and multiple birding platforms. This is the habitat of the endangered tapir, Costa Rica’s largest land mammal. In addition, you can visit Río Celeste, one of the most famous rivers in the country, which is known for its striking color.

Kiwanda Maji Tour

Kiwanda Maji, a peculiar name from the Swahili language that means “The Water Factory” is a term that perfectly explains how this Private Reserve embraces crystalline rivers and amazing waterfalls in the middle of the rainforest. Visit four different waterfalls with their breathtaking beauty as you venture into the rainforest. This wonderful tour will give you the opportunity to swim in a beautiful blue lake and interact with cows, horses, chickens and other farm animals during the adventure. In addition, you can learn how to milk cows and taste fresh artisanal products such as cheese with combinations of herbs and spices.

Diamante Eco Adventure Pass (One day-pass)

The Adventure Pass combines multiple tour options into one exceptional package that gives visitors maximum flexibility to enjoy all that Diamante has to offer. The tour offers one of the country’s longest canopy circuits with a Superman-style zipline, a 10-meter freefall and a hanging bridge over crocodiles. In addition, you will have unlimited access to the Diamante Animal Sanctuary, recognized as one of the most beautiful wildlife education centers in Costa Rica. Afterwards, you can enjoy the natural spa, hot springs and volcanic mud. To finish, there is a delicious lunch prepared with vegetables planted on their organic farm plus a main course from their menu.

Vandará (Ziplining, water slides, hot springs)

Get ready for a day full of magic in the surroundings of the Rincón de la Vieja Volcano. The adventure begins with a scenic horseback ride through trails and forests to reach the first platform, from here the adrenaline will rise while you slide down the various ziplines. Then, have fun on a thrilling ride down the 420-meter-long water slide that winds through the dry tropical forest floor and launches you into a freshwater pool.

Vandará

Afterwards, enjoy the natural spa, hot springs and volcanic mud. To finish, there is a delicious lunch prepared with vegetables planted on their organic farm plus a main course from their menu.

Immerse yourself in the healing waters of an all-natural Costa Rican thermal river, just minutes away from the Miravalles area. This half-day adventure will have you experiencing a range of emotions. Glide over the trees in a circuit of six zipline stations; you will also be able to cross three hanging bridges with a spectacular view. Next, you can explore the area while riding your own ATV, and finally relax on a horseback ride.

Extreme adventure in Borinquen

Enjoy a complete adventure package that includes a ziplining tour, natural spa, mud baths, horseback riding, trails and more. You can explore the ranch grounds all day long and see the many birds, howler monkeys, coatis and other wildlife. The afternoon is very relaxing: be prepared to soak in the hot springs and mud baths. Your body and skin will thank you!
Diving in Guanacaste

Costa Rica represents an ideal destination for scuba diving since its tropical climate, along with the extensive Pacific and Caribbean coastlines, allow nature lovers to find extraordinary beauty in its depths. If you have what it takes to discover our fascinating marine world, you’ll understand why Costa Rica is one of the main ecotourism destinations to enjoy the exciting adventure of scuba diving. The different coasts of the country await, with spectacular marine landscapes and the incredible biodiversity of the coral formations.

One of the distinctive features of Guanacaste is the Pacific Ocean. There’s no need to be a landlubber here, with a diverse selection of water sports for all tastes.

The diving options on offer from operators in Playa Hermosa, Playas del Coco and Playa Ocotal are just an hour’s drive from Daniel Oduber Quirós International Airport in Liberia. Other locations, such as Isla Bolaños and Isla Negritos, also offer excellent diving options and astounding marine diversity. These sites are located about one hour and forty-five minutes from the airport. Ideal sites for beginners include: Santa Elena Bay, Fila Playa Blanca and Bajo Meros. From March to November, we recommend visiting the waters of Punta Gorda, Bajo Tiburones, Isla Negritos, Isla Cabros and Islas Murciélagos, where you can find bull sharks (Carcharhinus leucas) in their natural habitat.

This list from Diving Center Cuajiniquil highlights a few extraordinary sites that offer incredible biodiversity and great diving in the canton of La Cruz.

Dive Sites

1. Black coral and longnose hawkfish (Antipathes, Oxycirrhites typus)
2. Gran Susto, Isla Muriélagos: Bull shark (Carcharhinus leucas)
3. Bajo Rojo: Giant manta ray (Manta birostris)
4. Gran Susto, Isla Muriélagos: Bull shark (Carcharhinus leucas)
5. Isla Loros: Whale Shark (Rhincodon typus)
6. Machetazo: Shovelnose guitarfish (Rhinobatos productus)
7. Bajo viejón: Pacific seahorse
8. Isla Loros: Nurse shark (Ginglymostoma cirratum)
9. Santa Elena Bay

Together with the above, Isla Despensa and the Islas Catalinas are excellent sites for admiring underwater life that is difficult to find elsewhere.
The Islas Catalinas, with their ghostly manta rays that congregate from January to April, and the Islas Murciélagos, populated by bull sharks, remain the two most famous long-range dive sites in Guanacaste. However, many sites are located much closer: Punta Gorda, Bajo Tiburones, Virador and Los Meros are all about 10 kilometers offshore, and a 20-25 minute boat ride, a fairly short trip in dive circles.

What is the Dome? Where is it located?

The Costa Rica Thermal Dome (CRTD) is a unique oceanographic phenomenon, formed by the interaction of wind and ocean currents, and results in the upwelling of nutrient-rich deep waters, resulting in higher levels of biomass than in the surrounding tropical waters and making it one of the most productive area in the northeastern tropical Pacific. It is located to the west of Central America and can measure between 300 and 1000 kilometers wide. The average position of the Dome core is near 9° N and 90° W, in areas outside national jurisdictions. Its diameter and position vary from year to year and over a characteristic annual cycle (Fiedler, 2002).

This oceanographic phenomenon results from the action of winds and ocean currents that vertically displace deep, cold, nutrient-rich waters towards the surface, creating an upwelling zone. This upwelling mobilizes an enormous mass of water (about 3.5 million m³/s) to the surface. The cold water mass is located close to 15 meters from the surface, but is much deeper around the CRTD. As they approach the surface, the nutrients in the cold water mass combine with sunlight to produce a large algae growth. The greater presence of algae, the first step in the food chain, leads to greater food availability for zooplankton, causing a population explosion. This, in turn, is manifested in each link of the food chain, generating an oasis of resources in the sea.

Due to its high productivity, the CRTD is considered an important habitat for several species. The high presence of phytoplankton also leads to an abundance of zooplankton (1), euphausiids (krill) (2), and small squid, which form the basis of several food chains that are essential for migratory species that benefit from the Dome at various stages of their life cycles. These include manta rays, turtles, dolphins and whales, as well as marine predators including large pelagic fish such as billfishes and sharks. Finally, the area also attracts commercially valuable species such as tuna, mahi mahi and squid. Endangered blue whales migrate south during the winter from Baja California to the Dome area to feed, mate, calve and care for their young, with some staying in the area year-round. The Dome is also part of the migratory corridor of a population of leatherback turtles that nest in Costa Rica (Shillinger et al., 2008, 2011). These critically endangered turtles leave their nesting beaches in Central America and Mexico and migrate through the area of the Dome, while hatchlings are transported to the Dome by coastal eddies. Most equipment suppliers offer certification by internationally recognized organizations such as the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI). Plan to invest about $300 per week or so for a beginner certification course. Many also operate one-day mini-courses to get acquainted with diving. This course does not lead to a certification, but does offer a taste of diving, allowing you to know if you want to go even deeper into the activity. To view the companies that have received a Tourism Declaration or those that are affiliated with the ICT, go to www.visitecostarica.com Make sure that the company you are going to hire has valid operating permits, risk insurance and the necessary security measures, which are not under the jurisdiction of the ICT. ICT assumes no responsibility in the event that a company is hired.

Guanacaste Diving Centers

The following Guanacaste dive centers can set it up and take it down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Web page / E-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centro de Buceo Agua Rica</td>
<td>Tamarindo</td>
<td>653-0094</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aguarica.net">www.aguarica.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buceo Aguacenter</td>
<td>Playa Flamingo</td>
<td>654-4148</td>
<td><a href="http://www.costarica-diving.com">www.costarica-diving.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diving Safaris de Costa Rica</td>
<td>Playa Hermosa</td>
<td>672-0012</td>
<td><a href="http://www.costaricadiving.net">www.costaricadiving.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocotal Diving Resort</td>
<td>Playa Ocotal</td>
<td>670-0321, ext. 15</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ocotaldiving.com">www.ocotaldiving.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reef del Norte</td>
<td>Cuajiniquil</td>
<td>679-1093</td>
<td>minorlara @ racsa.co.cr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resort Divers de Costa Rica</td>
<td>Playa Panamá</td>
<td>672-0106</td>
<td><a href="http://www.resortdivescr.com">www.resortdivescr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich Coast Diving</td>
<td>Playas del Coco</td>
<td>670-0176</td>
<td><a href="http://www.richoastadiving.com">www.richoastadiving.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centro de buceo Summer-Salt</td>
<td>Playas del Coco</td>
<td>670-0308</td>
<td><a href="http://www.summer-salt.com">www.summer-salt.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Edge Adventure Company</td>
<td>Playa Flamingo</td>
<td>654-4946</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thedgeadventure.com">www.thedgeadventure.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diving Center Cuajiniquil</td>
<td>Cuajiniquil</td>
<td>8984-8836</td>
<td><a href="mailto:minorlara@hotmail.com">minorlara@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2679-1217</td>
<td><a href="http://www.facebook.com">www.facebook.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unsurprisingly, the Costa Rican Dome is considered by scientists to be a critical habitat for the survival of at least these two endangered species.

www.arcgis.com
www.crdome.marviva.net

Most equipment suppliers offer certification by internationally recognized organizations such as the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI). Plan to invest about $300 per week or so for a beginner certification course. Many also operate one-day mini-courses to get acquainted with diving. This course does not lead to a certification, but does offer a taste of diving, allowing you to know if you want to go even deeper into the activity.

To view the companies that have received a Tourism Declaration or those that are affiliated with the ICT, go to www.visitecostarica.com

Make sure that the company you are going to hire has valid operating permits, risk insurance and the necessary security measures, which are not under the jurisdiction of the ICT. ICT assumes no responsibility in the event that a company is hired.
**Recommendations before diving**

- The dive center should be affiliated with one of the international recreational diving organizations such as PADI.

- Personnel must be qualified and trained in rescue diving, oxygen first aid and medical first aid.

- The center must have the maintenance records posted for the equipment and compressors.

- The air in your compressor must be clean.

- The boat must have first aid equipment, oxygen in sufficient quantity and quality, a first aid kit, a staff member trained in first aid and the use of oxygen equipment, drinking water, basic tools and spares, communication equipment, dive flag, an emergency plan written in a manner understandable to all, and a divemaster lifejacket for divers and staff.

- Check the date of the last hydrostatic test of the diving equipment. It must be visible on the tank and must be less than one year old.

- Check the mouthpieces before diving.

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**Snorkel in Guanacaste**

A calm sea with crystal-clear waters is the ideal environment for snorkeling. Guanacaste has no shortage. You will be able to choose between sites close to the beach that allow divers to choose their own route or ones that require taking a boat and going out to sea. Here are some of the best places to dive.

1. **San Juanillo**: one of the region’s best places to see the rich marine life. You can swim out to sea to see tiny blue and yellow fish, starfish and sea urchins. San Juanillo is located on the west coast and the nearest towns are Marbella to the north and Ostional, Nosara and Garza to the south. It is located 17 kilometers from Playa Guiones.

2. **Isla Chora**: almost 1.3 kilometers from Sámara. To get there you will have to travel by kayak or hire a boat. Tours to the island cost around $40 per person. Note that it is best to visit the island during low tide. According to experts, the best time for snorkeling is during the dry season, because in the rainy season the waters become turbid after heavy rainfall. The island has a quiet white sand beach where the water is calm and another rockier part with bigger waves.

3. **Ocotal**: located 40 km south of the city of Liberia, a few minutes from Playas del Coco. Its gentle waves make it ideal for swimming, snorkeling, diving or just relaxing. The beach is surrounded by dry forest and protected by hills and rock formations.

4. **Conchal**: it is one of the best known beaches in the province. It has crystal clear turquoise waters, making it the perfect place for swimming and snorkeling. Near the coast you can find a variety of marine life and swim with multicolored fish.

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5. **Nacasscolo**: located in the canton of Liberia in the Gulf of Papagayo. It has white sand, blue and crystalline waters. It has shade along its entire coast because from the plants surrounding the beach.

6. **Playa Rajada**: a beautiful, secluded and small beach that is no more than 1 km long with light sand, a gentle slope and crystal-clear blue waters with gentle waves. The beach is surrounded by lush trees of the tropical dry forest, located in San Juan Bay in the province of Guanacaste.

7. **Playa Bahía Junquillal**: the gentle waves, clear water and the long, sandy shore make Junquillal Bay Beach an ideal destination for diving and snorkeling.

8. **Playa Cuajiniquil**: Los Leoncillos, known by locals as Boca Marion, is a hidden away spot that is ideal for snorkeling.

9. **Playas del Coco and Playa Hermosa**: for beginner divers. It is one of the most visited places by divers, but also by tourists in search of beautiful beaches and sunny vacations.

10. **Islas Catalina**: to see manta rays. These islands are located half an hour from Playa del Coco in the province of Guanacaste and are famous for their beautiful seascape. You will be able to see sea turtles, sea horses, rays and sharks.

11. **Islas Murciélagos**: to see bull sharks. These islands are located on the north of the Pacific coast and are famous for bull shark sightings.

12. **Culebra Bay in the Gulf of Papagayo**: a quiet place to snorkel and enjoy the experience safely.

13. **Santa Elena Bay Marine Management Area**: Punta el Pochote is an ideal place for snorkeling because of the rich marine life present in the area.

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Sources:
- ticotimes.net
- visitelperiodico.com
- facebook.com/centrodebuceocuajiniquil
Wellness Tourism

Our incomparable spas in Guanacaste invites you to embark on the most pleasant journey of your life. They offer a range of rejuvenating treatments performed by highly qualified massage therapists.

We also provide an excellent training service that is adjusted to your physical condition and your time, with walking, jogging, physical trainers, resistance exercises. A personal trainer will provide you with the best advice that will fit your schedule and requirements.

We also invite you to practice yoga which relaxes, helps increase strength and flexibility, and is suitable for all ages and experience levels. You can enjoy a private class or one of the scheduled classes. Days and times vary for each class, so if you are interested, please contact the agency you are interested in.

(See links to agencies)

Waterfall meditation tour

This half-day tour will give you total relaxation and tranquility. You can choose a morning or afternoon tour, where we will drive to the Llanos de Cortés waterfalls. You’ll reach these incredible natural wonders after a short hike. Enjoy a few hours relaxing under the falling water and even jump off a cliff if you dare.

Fitness Center

Work out in a premium wellness destination with new state-of-the-art equipment backed by the first open, cloud-based platform. Pamper yourself with customized solutions designed to meet every need.

Links to agencies

- sisisitransfertourscostarica
- stayintamarindo.com
- lagartalodge.com
- playanegra.com
- calaluna.com
- jardindeleden.com
- Facebook.com/LAYMA
- hotelpuntaislita
- condovac lạcosta
- hotellucipalace
Guaitil is a small town located on the outskirts of Santa Cruz, the main center of Costa Rican folklore. In this town, people make clay pots by hand, decorate them with the natural colors of the earth and fire them in giant wood-burning ovens, just like their ancestors, the Chorotega Indians.

Bordered by the Nosara River, the Nosara Biological Reserve is an extremely privileged site with rivers that run through it, areas of forests and mangroves, and exuberant flora and fauna. Starting at the reception of the Lagarta Lodge hotel, you will have the opportunity to walk the trails on your own or accompanied by our guide, admiring the natural beauty of our biological reserve.

Diriá coffee is planted, harvested and processed in the highlands of Guanacaste in the cantons of Hojancha, Nicoya and Santa Cruz, one of the world’s few blue zones. The high longevity of the region’s population is a testament to levels of health and well-being that are the highest in the world. In large part, this has been credited to what people eat and drink in this privileged land.

Salsa is a union of Afro-Caribbean and European dance styles. If you come to a country like Costa Rica, when you hear this music and its rhythm you will surely feel like dancing salsa, a good option is to take a class, so you can show your skills in a safe and fun way.

At El Sitio de Don Pedro, located in Corralillo de Nicoya, you will be able to enjoy the cuisine and traditions of Guanacaste through experiential demonstrations that will involve you directly in the process.

This experience is a perfect way to learn the process involved in processing sugar cane and its derivatives using the trapiche, and an interactive demonstration on the ancient way of extracting the juice from sugar cane with the help of an ox named Puntalito. Afterwards, you can visit the Casita del Sabanero, which recreates the lifestyle of the authentic Costa Rican sabanero.

Finally, you will taste entirely homemade and traditional food, cooked in a wood stove where you can try a puntalito, or snack, of tortillas palmeadas, tanelas and donuts accompanied by the unforgettable and world-famous Costa Rican coffee.

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“Sabaneros” is the name given to the Costa Rican cowboys, since they would spend hours and hours guarding the great Guanacaste savannah and its animals. Be part of this experience, and experience working in a poultry farm, milking cows, saddling and tying horses. Includes: guide, refreshments, transportation.

Rural Tourism Tours

Amidst the plains of Guanacaste, surrounded by sugar cane fields and the most important river in the blue zone of Costa Rica, we find Hacienda el Viejo, with a manor house that is over 150 years old and offers the first rum experience in Costa Rica. Prepare your senses to hear, see, smell, touch and taste the whole process of extracting and cooking sugar-cane juice in a traditional way, until it reaches the distiller where the first liquors of the highest purity are obtained. The Ric-house awaits you with its oak barrels, which age and improve the flavors of our Ron Sabandí every day.

Rum Experience by Sabandí

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Sabanero Tours

Every Thursday of Holy Week, enjoy this cultural event for the whole family on the night of the full moon, the ritual practiced by our ancestors to thank the moon for their crops.

The evening will feature traditional Guanacaste cuisine and marimba and quijongo music.

Guanacaste Lunada

Learn about the culinary talent of the most famous Guanacaste tradition, with dishes such as arroz de maíz, atol de maíz pujagua and chicheme, among others. You can also enjoy these and other dishes at El Sitio de Don Pedro’s restaurant, amidst the sounds of marimba and quijongo with musicians who will be happy to give you a little musical lesson.

Guanacaste cuisine tour

Hand-pressed tortilla tour

Be part of a personal experience of the preparation of tanelas, rosquillas and empanadillas from traditional yellow corn, made by the expert hands of Guanacastecan cooks and, at the end of the day, enjoy a cup of coffee in the middle of a rustic local atmosphere. Complement your tour with restaurant’s culinary offerings, amidst the sounds of the marimba and quijongo.

Guanacaste Baking Tour

Learn about the varieties of corn, their properties and benefits, and make your own tortilla by pressing the corn flat with your hands and roasting it on a wood stove. At the end you will be able to taste your own creation with creme fraiche and drip coffee. Complement your tour with restaurant’s culinary offerings, amidst the sounds of the marimba and quijongo, with the option to interact with the musicians in a small gathering.

When looking for a tour operator, make sure that it is endorsed by the Costa Rican Tourism Board. Choose a tour with guided itineraries and always ask for guides who speak fluent Spanish and English. Schedule your tour in advance to avoid disappointment and always make reservations.
Las Baulas Marine National Park

A Ramsar site for mangrove protection and the nesting of the leatherback turtle (Dermochelys coriacea), the Tamarindo estuary is considered the largest in Latin America.

The leatherback is the world’s largest species of sea turtle, and is currently endangered. The nesting area in the park is the most important site for the species in the entire Pacific coast of the Americas.

Recommended activities
- Night tour to observe turtle nesting.
- Natural history talk for participants in the turtle tour.
- Day tour through the Tamarindo estuary.
- Surfing and swimming along Playa Grande.
- Snorkeling or surface diving along Playa Carbón.
- Horseback riding and taking in the scenic beauty.

Services:
- Exhibition room, general information, drinking water, latrines, trails, local guides, beach checkpoint, mangrove checkpoint, mangrove tour.

In the communities of Playa Grande and Tamarindo there is lodging, transportation, food, and an airstrip.

Do you want to enjoy the incredible spectacle of turtle nesting? Don’t miss

Las Baulas Marine National Park

How to get there:
1. From San José, travel to Liberia along Route 1 or Route 27, turning off onto Highway 23 and then Route 1.
2. From San José, travel along Route 1 or 27 until you reach Las Juntas de Abangares and keep going to the Puente de la Amistad, Santa Cruz, Villa Real and Matapalo to Playa Grande or Tamarindo.
3. From Liberia, travel to Philadelphia, Belen, Huacas and Matapalo to Playa Grande or Tamarindo.

Access: the beach has two official entrances: Caseta #1, at the MINAE offices, and Caseta #2 at the edge of the Tamarindo Estuary.

More information
- Las Baulas MNP: 2653-0470
- Subregión Nícoya: 2685-5667 / 2685-5267 / 2686-6760
- Regional AC Tempisque: 2686-4968 / 2686-4970

Address: Canton of Santa Cruz, Cabo Velas and 27 de Abril districts, 8 km from the community of Matapalo and 20 km from Tamarindo by road or 5 km by crossing the estuary.

Do you want to see leatherback turtle nesting? It is recommended to visit between October 20 and February 15.

December to April (dry season) is recommended to enjoy the sun and the beach.

What to bring
- Cap and sunglasses
- Fresh clothes
- Camera
- Walking shoes
- Hydration
- Sunscreen
- Repellent
- Snacks

More information here:
- Protected Areas
- Las Baulas

Photo: Sergio Pucci
The refuge protects the world’s main nesting and reproduction site for olive ridley turtles (Lepidochelys olivacea). Thousands of turtles lay their eggs all at once at various points throughout the year along this 7 km beach, in waves known as arribadas. Arribadas occur throughout the year, with 15,000 to 200,000 females arriving once or twice per month.

This natural spectacle only occurs on nine beaches worldwide, and Ostional is the second-most important beach globally, after Playa Escobilla in Mexico (Spotila, 2004).

Turtle egg management is part of sustainable development, because the community itself protects and maintains the turtle habitat.

**Recommended activities:**
- Night/day tour to observe turtle nesting.
- Day tour through the Tamarindo estuary.

Since the refuge has no lodging facilities, visitors generally stay in the area (Ostional, Nosara, San Juanillo or Sámara and other nearby places, where there are also restaurants and sodas).

### Services
- Pic-nic Area
- Camping
- Restaurante
- Restrooms
- Information
- Lodging
- Bar
- Snack Area
- Lookout
- Cafeteria
- Parking
- Microscopes
- Drilling water
- Repellent
- Fresh clothes
- Walking shoes
- Shoes
- Hydration
- Sunscreen
- Snacks
- Camera
- Cap and sunglasses
- Fresh clothes
- Walking shoes
- Hydration
- Repellent

If you go at night, do not wear reflective clothing. If you are carrying a flashlight, ask a guide how and when to use it. It can scare the turtles and they may even abort the nesting process, leaving the eggs uncovered and at the mercy of a predator.

Since light can influence the behavior of the animals, it can make them more active, which can lead to a higher probability of being destroyed by the same turtle.

Egg extraction is a natural process, and the community itself protects and maintains the turtle habitat, in turn, is allowed to sell a percentage of the eggs for their economic benefit.

Costa Rican legislation recognizes and legitimizes the sustainable use of Kemp’s ridley eggs.

### How to get there

1. From San José, go to Limonal directly via Route 1 or else on Route 27, followed by Highway 23 and Route 1 to Limonal. In Limonal, take the road over the Puente de la Amistad until you reach Nicoya. In Nicoya, take the road to Sámara and Nosara. When you reach Sámara, turn left towards Nosara for about 36 km, passing through Barco Quebrado, Garza, Guiones and Pelada until you reach Playa Ostional, Costa Rica. This route requires a total of 6 hours from San José.

2. From Liberia or Daniel Oduber Quirós International Airport (LIR), drive south to Santa Cruz, and from there turn off to Nosara, passing through 27 de Abril, Playa Lagarto, Frijol, Pitahaya, Azul and San Juanillo until you reach Ostional beach.

It is recommended that the vehicle be a 4×4.

By bus:

- The San José - Nosara route takes 5 to 6 hours, from Nosara, take a cab or drive to Playa Ostional, approximately 10 minutes (Alfaro company, +506 2222-2666 / +506 2682-0297). It is recommended to purchase your ticket at least one day in advance to secure your space.

- You can also take a bus on the San José-Santa Cruz route, which takes 5 to 6 hours. (Tralapa, +506 2221-7202 / +506 2680-0392), and take another bus on the Santa Cruz - Ostional route, which takes about 3 hours (however, this bus cannot make trips in heavy rain).

More Information

- Palo Verde NP: 2200-0125
- RNVS Ostional Office: 2682-0400
- Regional AC Tempisque: 2686-4968 / 2686-4970

**More Information here:**

- [Protected Areas: Ostional](#)
- [Ostional: Ridley turtle's main nesting site](#)
- [RNVS Ostional](#)
- [Video Ostional](#)
- [Vamos a Turistear](#)

**What to bring?**

- Cap and sunglasses
- Fresh clothes
- Camera
- Walking shoes
- Hydration
- Sunscreen
- Repellent
- Snacks

If you go at night, do not wear reflective clothing. Light can influence the behavior of the animals. Therefore, if you are carrying a flashlight, ask a guide how and when to use it.

Before venturing out, call the refuge office to make sure there is activity:

2682-0400 / 2682-0937

More Information here:

- [Protected Areas: Ostional](#)
- [Ostional: Ridley turtle’s main nesting site](#)

Eggs

Costa Rican legislation recognizes and legitimizes the sustainable use of Kemp’s ridley eggs.

Sustainable use of olive ridley turtle eggs

Turtle egg management is part of sustainable development, because the community itself protects and maintains the turtle habitat, and in turn is allowed to sell a percentage of the eggs for their economic benefit.

The egg extraction project has been in operation since 1987 and is managed by the Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Ostional (ADIO). The population, in an organized manner, is in charge of collecting and selling the eggs. Only eggs produced during the first two days of each arribada are collected, since they have a nearly 100% probability of being destroyed by the same turtles that continue to arrive.

The refuge administrators recommend attending an arribada with certified community guides. Some contacts include:

- 6005-4207: independent guide
- 2682-1229: local guides from the Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Ostional (ADIO)
- 2682-0428: Ostional Local Guides Association

**Certified Tours**

More information here:
Palo Verde
A bird sanctuary with water mirrors

This park is made up of lagoons and mangroves that drain into the Río Tempisque. It is a sanctuary for thousands of aquatic birds, both migratory and non-migratory, which is what led the park to be declared a Wetland of Importance under the Global Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR). Within the park is the 2.3-hectare Isla de Pájaros (Bird Island), located just offshore from the park. The island is incredibly important, since it is home to the country’s largest colony of the black-crowned night heron and is one of the most important waterfowl nesting islands in Central America. It is also the habitat of three species of endangered waterfowl:

- Night Heron (Nycticorax nycticorax)
- Jabiru (Jabiru mycteria)
- Roseate Spoonbill (Platalea ajaja)
- Fulvous Whistling-Duck (Dendrocygna bicolor)

Activities
Birdwatching tours and landscape viewing.

From September to March, thousands of herons, egrets, graps, ibises, ducks and northern jacanas, flock to the lake and neighboring areas to feed and reproduce.

Services
Hiking

How to get there
1. From San José, travel to Bagaces along Route 1 until you reach Highway 922.
2. From San José to Bagaces via Route 27, turning off on Highway 23 and then to Route 1, then Highway 922 to the destination.
3. From Liberia on Route 1 to the turnoff for Highway 922.

More information
Palo Verde NP: 2200-0125
Bagaces Subregion: 2671-1455 / 2671-1290
Regional AC Arenal-Tempisque: 2695-5908 / 2695-5180 / 2695-5982

Address: 20 km southwest from the CCSS Clinic of Bagaces. It is located in the Province of Guanacaste, between the Bebedero River and the Tempisque River, approx. 30km west of the city of Cañas.

Entry Fees
National visitors and residents over 13 years of age: $1000
Secondary students: $600
Foreign: $12

More information here:
Protected Areas: Palo Verde
Parque Nacional Palo Verde, Guanacaste

How to get there
1. From San José, go to Limonal directly via Route 1 or else on Route 27, followed by Highway 23 and Route 1 to Limonal. In Limonal, take the road over the Puente de la Amistad via Nicoya until you reach Santa Cruz, then continue to the community of Arado. The road to Arado is paved until the last 6 km, which is a gravel road, with signage that will guide you to the park administration.
2. From Liberia or Daniel Oduber Quirós International Airport (LIR), drive south to Santa Cruz, and then turn off towards Arado as per the instructions above.

More information here:
Palo Verde NP: 2200-0125
Bagaces Subregion: 2671-1455 / 2671-1290
Regional AC Arenal-Tempisque: 2695-5908 / 2695-5180 / 2695-5982

Address: 20 km southwest from the CCSS Clinic of Bagaces. It is located in the Province of Guanacaste, between the Bebedero River and the Tempisque River, approx. 30km west of the city of Cañas.

Entry Fees
National visitors and residents over 13 years of age: $1000
Secondary students: $600
Foreign: $12

More information here:
Protected Areas: Palo Verde
Parque Nacional Palo Verde, Guanacaste

This is a park that requires a medium level of fitness, so it can be

Protected Zones
Barra Honda National Park

Barra Honda is the largest known cave system in the country. The geology of Cerro Barra Honda, a mountain 300 meters tall, shows that it was once a system of reefs that emerged from the sea due to an upswell in the tectonic plates some 60 million years ago. These reef formations were shaped by blue and green algae that formed calcium deposits, as well as sponges, sea urchins and foramifera, tiny marine protozoans with a calcareous shell.

It is one of the many rounded limestone hills located in the province of Guanacaste, and the only one in the region that has been studied to date and shown to possess large caverns with significant decorations. Another important element of this area is its capacity as an aquifer reserve for the surrounding inhabitants.

To visit the caves, first hire a guide authorized by the administration and rent the equipment provided by the wilderness area.

People with conditions such as hypertension, vertigo or claustrophobia are not recommended to descend into the caves.

What to bring?
- Cap and sunglasses
- Fresh clothes
- Camera
- Walking shoes
- Sunscreen
- Repellent
- Snacks
- Hydration
- Sannettes
- Rayban glasses
- Snacks

Opening hours to visit the caves:
- From 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (descent).

How to get there
1. From San José, go to Limonal directly via Route 1 or else on Route 27, followed by Highway 23 and Route 1 to Limonal. In Limonal, take the road over the Puente de la Amistad toward Nicoya. When you arrive at the entrance of Nicoya, take the road east of the traffic lights, towards the community of Santa Ana (16 km) until you reach the entrance to the town of Barra Honda. The road is paved, though the last 6 km is a gravel road.
2. From Liberia, head to Santa Cruz and Nicoya. When you arrive at the entrance of Nicoya, take the road east of the traffic lights, towards the community of Santa Ana (16 km). The road is paved, though the last 6 km is a gravel road.

Normal visiting hours:
- Seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (visitor service for information and organization).

Services

Entry Fees

| National visitors and residents over 13 years of age | $1000 |
| Foreigners | $12 |

Tour to the caves, includes official entrance, guide and equipment.
- National: $19
- Foreign: $29

More information
Barra Honda NP: (506) 2659-1551
Tempsisque CA Region: 2686-4968 / 2686-4970

Dirección: It is located in the province of Guanacaste, 22 km northeast of the city of Nicoya. The park is made up of the Barra Honda hill and other surrounding hills. There are grocery stores in Barra Honda and the closest cities are Nicoya and Carmona, where you can find hotels, restaurants and markets.

Camaronal Wildlife Refuge

Located in Zapotal de Nandayure, the Camaronal Refuge is popular because it is a nesting site for four sea turtle species: leatherback, black, hawksbill and olive ridley, which hatch during different times of the year. However, the most common are the olive ridley and black turtles, since the hawksbill and leatherback turtles are endangered. Uninhabited Playa Camaronal has gray sand and blue water, stretching over 3 km between the mouth of the Río Ora in the west and the cliffs of Punta Camaronal to the southeast of the beach.

The turtle nesting process is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, an opportunity that captivates locals and foreigners alike. It is a natural spectacle that offers the opportunity to see live the arrival of these majestic reptiles to the beach; the size, variety and quantity that can be observed under the moonlight and the starry sky is truly impressive.

When to visit?

During Costa Rica’s rainy season, from May to November, is the best time to see sea turtles.

Hours of operation: 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Because adult sea turtles only lay their eggs at night, tour guides must be hired outside of visiting hours.

$40 is the approximate cost of hiring a guide.

May 2, 1994 the Camaronal Wildlife Refuge was created to protect mangroves and wildlife, including the four species of sea turtles.

Its beautiful waves make it a great destination for surfers. The largest wave ever recorded on the beach reached about 20 m. It also offers many recreational tourist activities such as fishing.

It has exuberant vegetation, with mangrove vegetation predominating, as well as trees including Madroño Negro de Montaño (Lennae viridiflora), el Cortez Amarilla (Tabebuia chrysanththa), el Guacimo (Guazuma ulmifolia), el Guapinol (Hymenaea courbaril), entre muchos otros.

Fantastic for birdwatching
with species such as hawks, cranes, herons, tiger hummingbirds and green kingfishers.
There are also other animals such as iguanas, armadillos and monkeys.
How to get there

By car
From San José take the Interoceanica Norte until you reach Limonal. Turn left at the Tres Hermanas Restaurant and cross the Puente de la Amistad, then take the road until Nicoya. Once you arrive in Nicoya, head south towards Sámara, continue to Carrillo and then take the turnoff to the right towards Playa Camaronal. This road is very steep and includes a ford of the Río Ora. Only vehicles with four-wheel drive will be able to reach it. During the rainy season, drivers will need to take an alternate route that starts at Estrada Rávago, near Playa Carrillo, to reach Playa Camaronal. It is a very scenic trip that exemplifies rural Costa Rica. This route requires a total of 6 hours from San José.

From Daniel Oduber Quirós International Airport (LIR), drive south to Nicoya, and from there turn off toward Sámara, passing through Hojancha. From there, head south to Sámara, continue to Carrillo and then take the turnoff to the right to Playa Camaronal. This road is very steep and includes a ford of the Río Ora. Only vehicles with four-wheel drive will be able to reach it.

By bus
You can take a bus from San José to Sámara, which takes 5 to 6 hours, and then a bus from Sámara to Carrillo, which takes an hour and a half (Terminal Alfaro, +506 2222-2666), and from there you can take a cab or rent a car and drive to Playa Camaronal, as there are no buses. The drive can take about 15 minutes. It is recommended to purchase your ticket at least one day in advance to secure your space. With prior notice, an official from the refuge will pick you up at the last stop in Carrillo and take you to the Camaronal Wildlife Refuge.

By plane
You can also take a flight between Juan Santamaría airport and Sámara or Carrillo, with daily departures on Sansa or Aerobell Airlines. With prior notice, an official from the refuge will pick you up from Sámara or Carrillo and take you to the Camaronal Wildlife Refuge.

Sighting hours:
from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

You must be accompanied by a guide accredited by INA, MINAE or SINAC for wildlife watching.

The maximum group size is 14 people and the minimum is one person, you need to call a few hours before your visit to reserve your space.

Wildlife watching consists of observing turtles from their arrival to the beach, as they dig holes, lay eggs and return to the sea, a process that generally takes one hour. When nesting, a turtle can lay an average of 80 to 120 eggs.

Price for Costa Rican nationals: $1.600.
Price for foreign: $10.

Location:
South side of the New Catholic Temple, Nicoya, Guanacaste.

For reservations:
(506) 8818-3909 e 8573-5297
Tempisque Conservation Area (ACT)
Regional Office, Nicoya
(506) 2686-4967
act.info@sinac.go.cr
Phone number of the Camaronal Wildlife Refuge Ranger Station
(506) 2656-2080
Tempisque Conservation Area (ACT)
(ACT): +506 2686-4967 / +506 2686-4968

Links
visitcostarica.co.cr  costaricainfolink.com  periodicomensaje.com

Located in the Costa Rican community of Pilangosta, Hojancha District, Guanacaste Province. Created on March 10, 1994, it is a Protected Wildlife Area that protects the tropical rainforest and very rainy premontane forest ecosystems. The area boasts a great diversity of flora and fauna, especially birds and orchids and a spectacular view of the peninsular landscape from highest point of the protected area, with views of the Gulf of Nicoya, Isla Chira sector, the plains of Guanacaste and part of the outer coast of the Nicoya Peninsula.
**Flora y fauna**

The avifauna present in this area and in the Monte Alto nature reserve is made up of terrestrial (non-aquatic), migratory and resident species, with the latter being the most common.

Within the reserve we can find rare species such as the barred hawk (*Leucopternis princeps*) and the yellow-bellied sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*), both of which have only been seen once. A variety of mammals is present, including bats.

The reserve has a high floristic richness despite the alterations caused by humans in the past. This richness is extremely important for the avian fauna because the nesting season coincides with the availability of fruits.

The exuberant vegetation includes about 70 species of orchids, including a species of shrub that is new to science (*Stemmadenia hannae*). The Hojancha tree (*Cleidion castaneifolium*).

**How to get there?**

**Route 1:** San José - Río Tempisque Bridge - La Mansión de Nicoya, Hojancha, Pilangosta. Distance 217 km

**Route 2:** San José - Liberia - Nicoya - La Mansión - Hojancha - Pilangosta. Distance 300 km

**Activities**

- Hiking
- Visits to nearby attractions
- Guided talks
- Orchid path
- Bird watching

**What to bring**

- Cap and sunglasses
- Hydration
- Sunscreen
- Repellent
- Snacks
- Fresh clothes
- Camera
- Walking shoes

**Services**

- Talks
- Restaurant
- Lodging
- Guided hiking

**Directories of Services**
Information

Guides certified by the Costa Rican Tourism Board

There are many advantages to hiring a certified tour guide. You can get more information and details about the natural, cultural and historical surroundings in your own language, which you might miss when traveling alone. In addition, you can learn more about the costarriqueñismos, the sayings of the local Ticos. Tour guides can help you save time and make the most of it. They are excellent at detecting animals and birds in hidden places or in the middle of the forest. We invite you to choose any of the following certified tour guides that best suits your needs, among more than 2,500 available in different specialties.

Directory of Certified Guides here

We want you to know every corner of our beautiful country. Travel like a local and enjoy your trip safely, taking into account the following recommendations:

Some travelers require a visa to visit Costa Rica. Remember to check the list of countries before purchasing your ticket and verify the entry requirements for the country where your passport was issued.

Costa Rica is a place where nature abounds and adventure awaits you. Just remember:

• Book tours offered by authorized travel agencies.
• Always check local weather conditions and forecasts before heading out on a tour.
• Make sure that the tour guide provides you with safety instructions and the rules of the activity before starting a tour.
• Make sure that the company has an operating permit issued by the Ministry of Health, insurance policies and certified tour guides.

To learn about COVID 19 protocols, enter here

Information on roads and airports

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<tr>
<th>Lugar</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tola</td>
<td>Tel.: 2232-2801/2232-7330</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juan Santamaria</td>
<td>Tel.: 2437-2626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Oduber</td>
<td>Tel.: 2666-1010</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Private tourist transportation

INTERNUS
Office in: Tola Tel.: 4110-0888 www.internuscosta.com info@internuscosta.com

AIR TRANSPORT
SANSA Tel.: 2296-1010 www.sansa.com info@sansa.com

Air Taxi
CENTROAMERICANO Tel.: 2431-0160/2431-0293 www.centroamericanotours.com info@centroamericanotours.com

Departures from Juan Santamaria International Airport:

Air Taxi Centroamericano Tel.: 2431-0160/2431-0293 www.centroamericanotours.com info@centroamericanotours.com

Flamingo Airport Tel.: 2431-0300 www.pavasairport.com info@pavasairport.com

Helioperators
Aerocentro Tel.: 2221-2480 www.aerocentro.com
Helioperators de CR Nicoya Tel.: 2675-3594

Diving
BUCEO Y SNORKEL TAMARINDO DIVING Tel.: 8583-5873 info@tamarindodiving.net www.tamarindodiving.net

Directory of services

TOURISM COMPANY WITH DECLARATION (DT) AND SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATE (CST)

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<th>Web page</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVIDAD TEMATICA FUNDACION MONKEY PARK</td>
<td>2653-8032</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info.fundacionmonkeypark@gmail.com">info.fundacionmonkeypark@gmail.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.monkeyparkfoundation.org">www.monkeyparkfoundation.org</a></td>
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<td>TECNOSE LIMITADA</td>
<td>26530090</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tamspl@racsa.co.cr">tamspl@racsa.co.cr</a></td>
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<td>TAMARINDO</td>
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<td>DREAM CHASSER TOUR OPERADOR LTDA</td>
<td>26532125, 60455085</td>
<td><a href="mailto:party@dreamchaseratamardino.com">party@dreamchaseratamardino.com</a>; <a href="mailto:party@dreamchaseratamardino.com">party@dreamchaseratamardino.com</a></td>
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<td>SANTA CRUZ, TAMARINDO, CALLE REAL, FRENTE AL HOTEL PASATIEMPOS DIAGONAL AL BANCO NACIONAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aquatic recreational activity

Surf
SURF AND PADDLE BOARD: KELLY’S SURF SHOP Tel.: 2653-1355 info@kellysurfshop.com info@kellysurfshop.com Contigua a Economy Rent a Car, Tamarindo

Fishing
FLAMINGO SPORT FISHING Tel.: 8389-5962 info@flamingosportfishing.com www.flamingosportfishing.com 1.5 km al norte de la escuela de Metapolo

PESCA DEPORTIVA, SNORKEL Y SURF KELLY SPORT FISHING Tel.: 8363-3509 info@tamarindodiving.net www.tamarindodiving.net 2 km del Cruz de Villareal, Finca Refundores

Diving
BUCEO Y SNORKEL TAMARINDO DIVING Tel.: 8583-5873 info@tamarindodiving.net www.tamarindodiving.net Frente al Hotel Best Western Tamarindo Vista Villas, Tamarindo

Links to videos of interest South Guanacaste:

Somos Monte Romo
Somos Matambú
Somos Hojancha Distrito Central
Somos Puerto Carrillo
Somos Montes Riscos
### Directory of services

#### Catamaran

**Tour in Catamarán**
- **Phone:** 2653-2125
- **E-mail:** party@dreamchasertamarindo.com
- **Address:** TAMARINDO CALLE REAL FRENTE AL HOTEL PACIFICOS DIAGONAL AL BANCO NACIONAL

**Parasailing: Panache Sailing**
- **Phone:** 2573-0450
- **E-mail:** info@panacheangling.com
- **Address:** 250 M ESTE DE HOTEL BAHÍA DEL SOL PLAYA POTRERO

#### Tourism company with declaration (DT) and sustainability certificate (CST) AgeTravel Agencies

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<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAMARINDO TRANSFERS &amp; TOURS</td>
<td>2653-4444</td>
<td><a href="mailto:reservations@tamarindoshuttle.com">reservations@tamarindoshuttle.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.tamarindoshuttle.com">www.tamarindoshuttle.com</a></td>
<td>CENTRO COMERCIAL GALERÍAS DEL MAR LOCAL # 1 TAMARINDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGENCIA DE VIAJES PININOS</td>
<td>8903-1171</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@pininosadventures.net">info@pininosadventures.net</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.pininosadventures.net">www.pininosadventures.net</a></td>
<td>COSTADO NORTE DE LA PLAZA DE DEPORTES DE HUICAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGENCIA DE VIAJES MARIN DEL REY</td>
<td>2653-1212</td>
<td><a href="mailto:reserv@marlindelrey.com">reserv@marlindelrey.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.marlindelrey.com">www.marlindelrey.com</a></td>
<td>FRENTE AL HOTEL TAMARINDO CC PLAZA TAMARINDO LOCAL B</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGENCIA DE VIAJES BLUE WATER ADVENTURES TOURS</td>
<td>2653-46468</td>
<td><a href="mailto:services@mytimefly.com">services@mytimefly.com</a>; <a href="mailto:hello@mytimefly.com">hello@mytimefly.com</a></td>
<td>TAMARINDO PACIFIC PARK LOCAL C 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>MYTIMEFLY LTD</td>
<td>2103-0970</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@mytimefly.com">info@mytimefly.com</a></td>
<td>CANO NACIONAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGENCIA DE VIAJES NATIVE’S WAY COSTA RICA</td>
<td>22447847</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@nativeway.com">info@nativeway.com</a></td>
<td>100 MTS OESTE DEL BANCO NACIONAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPSIQUE ECO TOURS</td>
<td>8453-0516</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@tempsiqueecotours.com">info@tempsiqueecotours.com</a></td>
<td>FRENTE AL REDONDEL DE TOSOS DE PUERTO HUMO, SAN ANTONIO, NICoya, GUANACASTE</td>
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### Lodging

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CABINAS LAS OLAS</td>
<td>2652-9315</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@cabinaslasolas.com">info@cabinaslasolas.com</a></td>
<td>PLAJA AVELLANAS, 25 KM AL SUR DE TAMARINDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGELES ECOLodge</td>
<td>2638-0502</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@angelsecolodge.com">info@angelsecolodge.com</a></td>
<td>DEL CRUCE 27 ABRIL 5KM NORTE, ENTRE LAS DELTAES Y RIO SECO CARRETERA A PLAJA JUNQUILLAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOUTIQUE HOTEL &amp; SPA, LOS ALTOS DE EROS</td>
<td>8856-4222</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@losaltosdeeros.com">info@losaltosdeeros.com</a></td>
<td>CAÑAS FULITA FRENTE AL SABANEIRO 2KM AL SUR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOTEL LAS TORTUGAS</td>
<td>2653-0423</td>
<td><a href="mailto:yohaqueri@yahoo.com">yohaqueri@yahoo.com</a>; info@lostortugas旅馆</td>
<td>PLUA GRANDE DE MATA PAZO, SANTA CRUZ GUANACASTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOTEL PLAYA NEGRA</td>
<td>2652-9134</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hotelplayanegra@ice.co.cr">hotelplayanegra@ice.co.cr</a></td>
<td>PARQUE DE SANTA CRUZ 4 KM CARRETERA AVELLANAS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Night life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAR SHARKYS</td>
<td>2653-4905, 2653-4906</td>
<td><a href="mailto:reservaciones@bighotwagelodge.com">reservaciones@bighotwagelodge.com</a>; <a href="mailto:info@bighotwagelodge.com">info@bighotwagelodge.com</a></td>
<td>COSTADO OESTE DE LA POTRERO DEL CRUCE TAMARINDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR PACIFICO</td>
<td>2653-4406</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pacificobartamarindo@hotmail.com">pacificobartamarindo@hotmail.com</a></td>
<td>COSTADO OESTE DE LA ROTONDA DE TAMARINDO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Humpback whales in Costa Rica

Northern Hemisphere Population
Costa Rica’s Bahía Ballena, Isla del Caño Biological Reserve and Bahía Drake are some of the best places on the planet to catch a glimpse of the humpback whale. These sites are located in the northern and southern Pacific coast of our country. According to National Geographic, Ballena Marine National Park is one of the 10 best places to spot humpback whales. The Guanacaste coast is great as well!

Regardless of whether you’re relying on patience or luck, watching humpback whales and their calves jumping and performing acrobatic feats in the ocean is something we should all see at some point in our lives.

Humpback whales travel long distances from their feeding areas in cooler waters, including the polar oceans, to their breeding areas in the warm waters of Costa Rica.

These giants remain in Costa Rica for a total of 10 months per year, with groups coming from different hemispheres in each half of the year. This gives the country the longest humpback whale watching season in the world, thanks to the presence of whales from the northern and southern hemispheres.

Characteristics of the species
Humpback whales (Megaptera novaeangliae) are marine mammals belonging to the baleen family (Balaenopteridae) of the suborder Mysticeti (baleen whales) and the Cetacea order, which includes whales, orcas and dolphins.

The name “humpback” is due to its distinctive short, stout dorsal fin. Its Spanish name, ballena jorobada, comes from joroba, the Spanish word for “hump”.

The scientific name, Megaptera, is a compound word consisting of the Greek words mega, large, and ptera, fin; a reference to the animal’s massive pectoral fins, which can reach up to one-third of its body length, around 5 meters.

Size to scale
Humpback whales’ pectoral fins are the largest of any whale species, and can measure 4 - 5.5 meters in length.

WHERE THEY COME FROM
Migratory movements are part of most whales’ annual lifecycle; they spend the summer in their feeding grounds (high latitudes) and migrate to tropical waters (low latitudes) in the winter to reproduce and raise their calves.

Main areas of sightings in Costa Rica
Whale watching services are available on the following beaches in Costa Rica:

- Cuajiniquil
- Playas del Coco
- Sámara
- Cóbano
- Jacó
- Quepos
- Herradura
- Dominicalito
- Bahía Rincón
- Bahía Ballena/Uvita
- Drake Bay
- Puerto Jiménez
- Playa Zancudo
- Cabuya
- Isla del Caño por Sierpe
- Isla del Caño por Bahía Drake
- Golfo de Nicoya
- Mal País
- Montezuma
- Tambor
- Cúcuta
- Paquera
- Puntarenas
- Isla Tortuga
- Sierpe

WHAT DO THEY DO?
- Mate
- Give birth
- Raise their calves

Calves weigh between 1 & 2 tons when they are born. By the beginning of their second year, they leave their mother’s side. By this time, they measure about 9 meters in length.

36 tons, its weight approximately

These extraordinary cetaceans can live for 60 - 80 years.

WHERE THEY COME FROM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahía de Santa Elena</td>
<td>December-April</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FEEDING:
Humpback whales possess between 270 and 440 grayish-black baleen plates on each side of the jaw, measuring 70 to 100 cm in length, which allow them to filter out water in order to obtain their food of krill and small fish.

SEXUALITY:
Sexual maturity is reached between 6 and 11 years, at a size of between 12 and 14 m. The reproduction period lasts for a period of 4-5 months.

HOW ARE THEY BORN?
The mother whale begins her contractions and the calf starts to leave the mother’s body. Calves are born tail-first, not head-first.

The umbilical cord breaks off once the calf leaves the mother’s body.

In order to take its first breath, the calf is helped to the surface by its mother.

The calf consumes between 60 and 70 liters of milk each day.

Ballena Marine National Park
To protect this valuable site, the government of Costa Rica created Ballena Marine National Park (PNMB) as a sanctuary for these and other marine species including pantropical spotted dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, manta rays, clownfish and mackerel. Isla Ballena is also an important nesting site of the American white ibis. The bird species found in the park also include frigatebirds and the brown booby.

The PNMB is the first Costa Rican protected area created exclusively for its marine resources. It is also the first marine park in Central America (UICN-FUNDEVI 1995/SINAC) and is the eighth-best site for whale watching in the world, according to National Geographic.

Links:
- www.sinac.go.cr
- www.youtube.com
- www.youtube.com/watch
- mongabay.com
- www.nacion.com

The Costa Rican Tourism Board thanks the biologist Javier Rodríguez, Frank Gorter and Alberto Villeda for their contributions to the content and proofreading process for this infographic on humpback whales. Thanks also go to Marjorie Solís, Jorge Oviedo and Allan Mora for their contributions to the content of this infographic.

Coordination and production: Mario I. Badillet Jara; Design and layout: Floria Leiva Pacheco; Illustrations: Alexander Salazar.

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observación de aves
93 52
Avellanas
especies de aves
Papagayo
Nosara
Parque Nacional
Guanacaste
Peñas
Nicoya
Rincón de la Vieja
5% de la diversidad mundial
7 especies acuáticas
Cabo Blanco
O Céano
Los Chiles
Carara
NICARAGUA
observar aves
89 endémicas nacionales
familias de aves
posición
Parque Nacional
Heredia
San José
Savegre
Puerto Viejo
Isla del Caño
Cartago
Guápiles
Drake
Parque Nacional
Chirripó
Parque Nacional
Pacuare
Corcovado
Parque Nacional
Puerto Jiménez
San Vito de Paso Canoas
Puerto Viejo
Sixaola
MNP
con la cultura, ruralidad y comunidades locales que se integran
diferenciados en 4 zonas avifaunísticas:
• vida silvestre, reservas privadas y comunidades aledañas,
• aves, que involucra 7 parques nacionales, 1 refugio nacional de
• 12 nodos compuesta por
• Ruta Nacional de Aves
• Tierras Altas, Vertiente del Caribe, Pacífico
de aves y tipos de hábitats respecto al territorio que posee.
• con
• mundial) y 589 000 km² de mar territorial; posee una avifauna
de superficie terrestre (0,03 % de la superficie
de 51 100 km²
El Aviturismo en
que supera a toda Europa. Costa
• BOSQUE TROPICAL SECO,
• • 4 especies endémicas,
• • 7 • • •
• del mundo
• de las especies conocidas en el mundo.
• para la observación de aves.
• de aves rapaces migratorias, surcan el cielo de
• 3 millones
**The Palo Verde node** is one of the most biodiverse areas in Costa Rica. It encompasses a rich mosaic of over 15 natural communities, including the deciduous lowland forest, the evergreen forest, the flooded forest, the deciduous limestone hill forest, grasslands and mangroves.

The Palo Verde Node is partially located in the Tempisque Conservation Area and in the Arenal Tempisque Conservation Area, which also contains Palo Verde National Park.

This area is a paradise for birdwatchers, as there are hundreds of species, including the mangrove hummingbird (Amazilia boucardi), endemic to Costa Rica, limpkin (Aramus guarauna), great egret (Ardea alba), beak billed heron (Coereba flaveola), northern jaca (Jacana spinosa), wood stork (Mycteria americana), bare-throated tiger heron (Tigrisoma mexicanum), and the northern crested caracara (Caracara cheriway). It is a paradise of waterfowl, shorebirds, seabirds, raptors, ducks and the most colorful jungle birds. In addition, you can observe dozens of species, such as macaws, canarans, herons, vultures, sparrow hawks, hawks, parrots, woodpeckers, toucans and kingfishers. The area is also home to the johmu (Ubirub mysticus), red-eared spoonbill (Platalea ajaja), collared aracari (Pteroglossus torquatus), ferrugnous pygmy owl (Glaucidium mexicanum), white hawk (Parabuteo aitii), king vulture (Sarcoramphus papa), long-tailed manakin (Chiroxiphia linearis), thick-billed tern (Cypselurus dinornis), grey hawk (Buteo plagiatus) and more.

The landscape is dominated by dense tropical vegetation, a consequence of a warm and sub-humid climate. Palo Verde, Barra Honda, Diría and Las Baulas National Parks are located here.

### **BIRDS EMBLEMATIC BIRDS PALO VERDE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Temperate season</th>
<th>Rainy season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Amazilia boucardi</em></td>
<td>Common name: Mangrove Hummingbird</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
<td>October to February</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dendrocygna bicolor</em></td>
<td>Common name: Fulvous Whistling-Duck</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
<td>From the middle of the rainy season to the beginning of the dry season</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aramus guarauna</em></td>
<td>Common name: Limpkin</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
<td>From the middle of the rainy season to the beginning of the dry season</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rostrhamus sociabilis</em></td>
<td>Common name: Snail Kite</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
<td>July to September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Platalea ajaja</em></td>
<td>Common name: Red-eared Spoonbill</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
<td>January to February</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### **Palo Verde National Park**

This park is made up of lagoons and mangroves that drain into the Río Tempisque. It is a sanctuary for thousands of aquatic birds, both migratory and non-migratory, which is why the park is declared a Wetland of Importance under the Global Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR). Within the park is the 2.3 hectare Islote de Pijaros (Bird Island), located just offshore from the park. The island is incredibly important, since it is home to the country’s largest colony of the black-crowned night heron and is one of the most important waterfowl nesting islands in Central America. It is also the habitat of three species of endangered waterfowl.

### **Parque Marino Baulas**

Habitat of many aquatic birds. A significant attraction of the beaches here is the leatherback turtle nesting season.

### **Diría National Park**

A protected area with a significant value for conservation and ensuring a sustainable water supply. It offers great scenic beauty.

### **Ostional National Wildlife Refuge**

Protects the olive ridley turtle nesting sites, with up to 200,000 individuals arriving during the rainy season. Birds: scarlet macaw, great cormorant, frigate birds.

### **Cipanci National Wildlife Refuge**

Its main attractions include mangroves, estuaries, rivers, forests, scenic beauty and diverse flora and terrestrial and aquatic fauna.

### **Barra Honda National Park**

Barra Honda is the only park in Costa Rica with a submerged Cave System. You can observe various species of birds, like the white-throated magpie-jay (Calocitta formosa), white-tailed deer and anteaters. It is also possible to observe caiman, crocodiles, aquatic white-tailed deer and antelopes.

For more information visit:
- [ebird.org](http://ebird.org)
- [Museo de Costa Rica](http://museocr.com)
- [Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ)
- [List of Parks of Costa Rica](http://www.aciste.org)
- [Unión de Ornitólogos CR](http://www.unor.org)
- [ebird.org](http://ebird.org)
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The country has developed the National Bird Route which is composed of 12 nodes or main birding sites, involving 7 National Parks, 1 National Wildlife Refuge, private reserves and surrounding communities, distributed practically throughout the country and differentiated into 4 Bird Zones: Tropical Dry Forest, Highlands, Caribbean Tropical Rainforest and South Pacific Tropical Rainforest. All of them with a high diversity of bird species that is complemented by the culture, rurality and local communities that are integrated into this route.

The diversity of birds is divided into four ornithological provinces: Highlands, Caribbean Slope, North Pacific and South Pacific. Including Cocos Island and its territorial waters.

For national and international birdwatchers, Costa Rica is one of the most important tourist destinations in the world. A country with a small territory of 51,100 km² of land area (0.03% of the world’s surface) and 589,000 km² of territorial sea, it has an avifauna with more than 900 species that surpasses all of Europe. Costa Rica is possibly the country with the most bird species and habitat types in the world in relation to the size of its territory.

Costa Rica has:

- 3 million migratory birds of prey fly through the sky from August to November.
- 220 species are migratory and correspond to Nearctic migratory species from North America.
- 19 are globally threatened.
- One of the top 5 favorite birding countries in the world.
- 7 endemic species, 4 on the mainland, 3 on Cocos Island.
- In total, Costa Rica’s bird species constitute 9% of the world’s known species. (Stiles and Skutch, 2007, p. 13-31)

Costa Rica has the largest number of bird species in relation to the size of its territory. It has 924 species of birds, which represents 9% of the 10,000 species that are known in the world.

- 346/247 is possible to see birds watching
- 167 acoustic species
- 89 bird families
- 52 hummingbird species
- 75 species of birds of prey
- 93 endemic regional species
- 5% of global diversity
- Unique geographic location
- 7 local endemic species
Credits

The Costa Rican Tourism Board thanks the Ministry of Culture and Youth, Tamarindo Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, the Tamarindo Integrated Development Association, the Municipal Governments of Santa Cruz and Nicoya, the National System of Conservation Areas, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, and businesses and individuals for their collaboration in the creation of the Tourism and Cultural Guide of Tamarindo, Nicoya and Santa Cruz.

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Photos: The authors of the photographs are included in the Tourism and Cultural Guide.

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