



## MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK

Manuel Antonio National Park is deservedly the most popular park in Costa Rica. Located in the country's central Pacific coast, its beautiful white-sand beaches are surrounded by lush jungle and by emerald waters. Here you can enjoy a guided nature trek through the park, snorkel in the shallows of the nearby islands or enjoy a lazy day of sunbathing. The park is closed on Mondays.

The area surrounding the park is home some of the country's best boutique hotels, and we know them all. Day excursions include a butterfly farm, canopy tours, an aerial tram, horseback riding, tours of Carara Biological Reserve (home to hundreds of Scarlet Macaws) and surfing at famous Jaco Beach.

## ARENAL VOLCANO

The area surrounding Arenal Volcano is one of the most popular destinations in Costa Rica. Since awaking in 1968, Arenal has been in a nearly constant state of activity. On clear nights, you can observe bright red lava flows and glowing eruptions from miles away. These spectacular fireworks are often followed by thunderous rolling sounds. It is not uncommon for hotels in the area to offer a midnight wakeup service, allowing you to see the volcano at the peak of its nightly performances.

This area is also home to excellent hot springs, such as the luxurious series of cascading pools and thermal baths at Tabacon Hot Springs—the perfect end to a day of horseback riding, caving, river rafting or lake windsurfing. We recommend a three-day, two-night stay with extensions to the Monteverde cloud forest or idyllic San Ramon.

In addition to Arenal Costa Rica has six other active volcanoes. One of the most accessible is Poas, located between San Jose and La Fortuna. Poas became active again in the 1950's. Visitors in route to Arenal can stop at the Poas interpretation center, walk a short distance to an overlook and gaze into the main crater's blue-green sulfuric pool.



## NICOYA PENINSULA

The most noted feature of the Peninsula de Nicoya are the beaches. Within the vast expanse of coastline are innumerable magnificent beaches with dramatic coastal scenery, and small villages each with its own distinct charm.

Water sports such as surfing, fishing, snorkeling and diving define much of the character of the villages. Most areas have been discovered by surfers as the pacific side of Costa Rica presents one of the best stretches of surfing coastline in the world.



The Nicoya Peninsula experiences two extremely different seasons: the dry season begins at the end of November and until May the sun drenches the land. Many trees lose their leaves and cars driving on the rutted dirt roads stir up clouds of dust, covering the roadside foliage with a dull, brown layer. The first rainfalls to relieve the dry season occur in May, initiating the "little summer" with intermittent rain showers.

Rainfalls increase during the following months to become very heavy in September to November, when the peninsula turns into a dripping lush rainforest. Temperatures during the rainy season, called winter here, may sometimes drop to 22°C, while in dry season temperatures can reach 36°C.

## SAN JOSÉ

San José is the political and economic center of the country, comprising more than half of the country's business and services. It is a city with an interesting mix of history and modernization. Although the downtown area is almost uninhabited by residents, it is a stop-over point that sees more than one million people a day, where people from the metropolitan area and visitors converge. It is a hub made up of many points of interest, as well as faces and colors that reflect the history of our people.

## MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST

Located 100 miles northwest of San José, Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve is one of Costa Rica's most diverse reserves. It is also one of the least visited; only 100 visitors are allowed at any time and the roads to the park are left unpaved to discourage traffic.

The few who do visit Monteverde will find it well worth their time. Here, giant trees disappear into nearly perpetual mist, hummingbirds dart among cascades of orchids and multi-colored frogs adorn mossy riverbanks. Biologists have cataloged more than 2,500 types of plants, 400 bird species, 500 varieties of butterflies and 100 kinds of mammals within the reserve. Monteverde is famous for its population of resplendent quetzals. These bright green and red birds are best viewed during the morning hours of the April to May mating season.

The area outside the reserve is well known for zip-line canopy tours, tree-top observation bridges, a frog pond, an orchid garden, an insect museum, a butterfly garden, and a serpentarium. Santa Elena, the nearest town, produces excellent cheese and coffee through local cooperatives.

