



Costa Rica



• Costa Rica, located in Central America, lies between Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. It is a little bigger than Vermont and New Hampshire combined. There are 800 miles of coastline between the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Cocos Island, which is about 300 miles off the Pacific coast is under Costa Rican sovereignty. Costa Rica is the Spanish word meaning "rich coast."

• Costa Rica has coastlines on the Caribbean Sea as well as the Pacific Coast. The tropical coastal plains rise to mountains, active volcanoes and a temperate central plateau where most of the people live. San Jose, the capital is there.

• Chirripo Mountain is the highest point in Costa Rica at 12,500 feet. The country's lowest point is 790 feet below sea level in the caves of Barra Honda National Park.

• There are more than 121 volcanic formations in Costa Rica, and seven of them are active. Arenal Volcano is one of the ten most active volcanoes in the world. Irazu is the tallest volcano in Costa Rica at 11,259 feet.

• A quarter of Costa Rican land is protected as the rain forest preserves draw more visitors.

• Costa Ricans refer to themselves as Ticos (males) or Ticas (females). Many people in Costa Rica give coffee to babies (in their bottles) and young children.

• The Guanacaste is Costa Rica's national tree and the clay-colored thrush is the national bird. The national flower is the guaria morada, an orchid.

• The Constitution provides that Costa Rica have no military force..

• Industry: Microprocessors, food processing, textiles and clothing, construction materials

• Agriculture: Coffee, pineapples, bananas, sugar; beef; timber

• Exports: Coffee, bananas, sugar, pineapples, textiles

• The Tempisque River Bridge (known locally as La Puente de Amistad) that connects the mainland to the Nicoya Peninsula was a gift from Taiwan.

• Costa Rica's official language is Spanish, though a large number of its citizens are bilingual. English, due to its status as the international language of tourists, is the most common second language in Costa Rica.

• Many fast food restaurants (such as McDonald's and Burger King) do home deliveries in Costa Rica.

• Costa Rica declared independence from Spain on September 15, 1821. Spain did not recognize their independence until May 10, 1850.

• The literacy rate in Costa Rica is an impressive 97%.

Oscar Arias, former president of Costa Rica was awarded the Nobel Prize for promoting peace in Central America.

• Costa Rica hosts more than 5% of the world's biodiversity even though its landmass only takes up .03% of the planet's surface. There are more than:

- 130 species of freshwater fish
- 160 species of amphibians
- 208 species of mammals
- 220 species of reptiles
- 850 species of birds
- 1,000 species of butterflies
- 1,200 varieties of orchids
- 9,000 species of plants
- 34,000 species of insects
- and still counting as new species are discovered every day

At Right: Poas Volcano has the second widest crater in the world (nearly one mile in diameter).

