

COSTA RICA

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**Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++506**

Costa Rica Tourist Board: Edificio Genaro Valverde, Calles 5 y 7 Avenida 4, San José Tel: 223 1733 Fax: 223 5452 E-mail: info@tourism-costarica.com Website: www.tourism-costarica.com

Capital: San José **Time:** GMT - 6

Background: Costa Rica is a Central American success story: since the late 19th century, only two brief periods of violence have marred its democratic development. Although still a largely agricultural country, it has achieved a relatively high standard of living. Land ownership is widespread. Tourism is a rapidly expanding industry.

Location: Middle America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama

Map References: Central America and the Caribbean

Area: total: 51,100 sq km land: 50,660 sq km water: 440 sq km note: includes Isla del Coco

Climate: tropical and subtropical; dry season (December to April); rainy season (May to November); cooler in highlands

Terrain: coastal plains separated by rugged mountains

Natural Resources: hydropower

Population: 3,710,558 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: noun: Costa Rican(s) adjective: Costa Rican

Ethnic Groups: white (including mestizo) 94%, black 3%, Amerindian 1%, Chinese 1%, other 1%

Religions: Roman Catholic 85%, Evangelical Protestant, approximately 14%, other less than 1%

Languages: Spanish (official), English spoken around Puerto Limon

Economy: Costa Rica's basically stable economy depends on tourism, agriculture, and electronics exports. Poverty has been substantially reduced over the past 15 years, and a strong social safety net has been put into place. Economic growth has rebounded from -0.9% in 1996 to 4% in 1997, 6% in 1998, and 7% in 1999. Inflation rose to 22.5% in 1995, dropped to 11.1% in 1997, 12% in 1998, and 11% in 1999. Large government deficits - fueled by interest payments on the massive internal debt - have undermined efforts to maintain the quality of social services. Curbing inflation, reducing the deficit, and improving public sector efficiency remain key challenges to the government. Political resistance to privatization has stalled liberalization efforts.

Industries: microprocessors, food processing, textiles and clothing, construction materials, fertilizer, plastic products

Currency: 1 Costa Rican colon (C) = 100 centimos

Railways: total: 950 km narrow gauge: 950 km 1.067-m gauge (260 km electrified)

Highways: total: 37,273 km paved: 7,827 km unpaved: 29,446 km (1998 est.)

Waterways: about 730 km, seasonally navigable

Ports and Harbors: Caldera, Golfoito, Moin, Puerto Limon, Puerto Quepos, Puntarenas

Airports: 155 (1999 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 28 2,438 to 3,047 m: 2 1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 914 to 1,523 m: 18 under 914 m: 7 (1999 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 127 914 to 1,523 m: 29 under 914 m: 98 (1999 est.)

Visa: a passport valid for 6 months is required from all, except nationals of the UK and its dependencies and nationals of America and Canada carrying proof of identity.

Duty Free: permitted goods: 500 cigarettes, 3 litres of alcoholic beverages, a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use.

Health: typhoid and polio precautions. Malaria risk through out the year. Water is heavily chlorinated and may cause stomach upsets.

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