

Costa Rica Tropical Fruit Tour July 27 - August 3, 2019

Explorations is pleased to offer this custom natural history tour to Costa Rica. Designed specifically for the COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS, the BONITA SPRINGS TROPICAL FRUIT CLUB, tropical fruit enthusiasts, gardeners, and nature lovers, the tour highlights the beauty of Costa Rica's botanical diversity. With visits to educational facilities, farmers markets, and a tram through the forest canopy you get a close look from bottom to top! Not only is the scenery and flora spectacular, the locations visited also provide excellent birding and wildlife viewing. The tour is escorted by a naturalist guide and the use of private transportation will allow for short stops and flexibility in the schedule. The accommodations were specifically chosen for their quality, lush landscaping, and surrounding nature.



YOUR ITINERARY

Day 1, Saturday, July 27, 2019: Fly to San Jose

Upon arrival in San Jose from your international flight you have a shuttle to the Hotel Buena Vista. [HOME | HOTEL BUENA VISTA](#)

About a 20 minute drive from the airport, the Hotel Buena Vista is a beautiful Spanish-colonial style resort. It is the only hotel in the area atop a mountain with a 360° panoramic view of 3 volcanoes; Poas, Barva and Irazú. The hotel is located on a large plot of land with extensive tropical gardens including many fruit trees and planted with coffee. It even has its own nature walk/coffee trail (takes about 30 minutes) where



you can experience a microcosm of the ecosystem. The use of native plant species also encourages a variety of butterflies and birds to visit the property. Thanks to their altitude, Hotel Buena Vista maintains a pleasant year-round temperature of 80 degrees during the day. The charming resort offers spacious rooms with free WiFi and satellite TV.

Day 2, Sunday, July 28: San Jose - Guacimo (B/L)

After breakfast we depart San Jose (with private guide and transportation) for a scenic mountain drive (2 hour drivetime) through Braulio National National Park to Guacimo for the next two overnights at the Hotel Del Rios.

<https://www.hotellosrios.com>

Located in Guácimo adjacent to a small river, the Hotel Los Rios features an outdoor swimming pool and garden. This hotel has air-conditioned rooms with a private bathroom and flat-screen TV. Guests can enjoy a meal at the restaurant or a drink at the bar and free WiFi is available.

First stop along the way is a Farmers Market (la Feria del Agricultor) in Heredia. The outdoor market provides a look at the great crop diversity in Costa Rica and a chance to buy some fruit for snacks.

As we head east from San José on the Guápiles Highway the Zurquí tunnel transports you from the modern world into the rainforest and cloud forest of Braulio Carrillo National Park. Time permitting while transversing Braulio National National Park, we may stop at the Quebrada Gonzalez ranger station to stretch our legs with a 1km walk through the rainforest on the El Ceibo Trail. Even without leaving the vehicle, the views are breathtaking. It's one of the busiest highways in Costa Rica, but if you walk a hundred yards to either side you are enveloped in another time. The park protects 117,300 acres and elevations range from 118 to 9514 feet. The habitats represented in Braulio Carrillo are cloud forest, margin/edge, regenerating tropical rainforest-lowland and tropical rainforest-upland. Its cloud forest inhabitants include more than 500 species of birds and over 150 species of mammals.



The next stop is for lunch and then a tour at the Atlantic Rainforest Aerial Tram founded by Dr. Donald Perry. The tram is on the Eastern flank of Braulio Carrillo National Park in a private reserve. An open gondola takes you on a two level tour of the rainforest canopy. It traverses a valley and climbs a small mountain through the treetops as much as 170 feet off the ground. Each gondola carries up to four passengers and a naturalist guide. There are also kilometers of excellent hiking trails. The very first of its kind in the country, the tram allows easy exploration of every level of the dense Costa Rican rainforest from the ground to the treetops. The Aerial Tram Tour lets you see secrets the forest keeps while

you guide above the treetops and experience magnificent views of the Braulio Carrillo National Park and the private reserve. An immersive nature experience over the forest canopy, it is the longest and only guided tram tour in the country. The 1.10 hours gondola ride includes a guided natural walk on paved nature trails, a visit to the beautiful and specialized Butterfly Garden, a walk through the orchid garden comprised of orchids rescued from fallen tree trunks and finally a visit to the Terrarium to see interesting amphibians and reptiles species.



Day 3, Monday, July 29: EARTH University (B/L)

After early breakfast and 15 - 20 minute drive, we have all day for touring and educational classes/workshops with a focus on tropical fruit production at Earth University. EARTH University (Universidad EARTH, Escuela de Agricultura de la Región Tropical Húmeda) with 990 acres, is a private, non-profit university that offers two programs of study: an undergraduate degree in agricultural sciences and a master's degree in agribusiness innovation. The

students (predominantly from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa) work to become leaders of positive socio-economic and environmental change for their home countries and the world at large through a techno-scientific education emphasizing Social entrepreneurship.

Arriving around 9:00 am, we first have orientation and watch a short introduction video about EARTH's vision & mission.

After a tour of the campus facilities, we can learn



about their Academic Projects like the Banana Plantation. Their banana farms are managed under the ideals of sustainable production and utilization of human resources. In addition to viewing the banana plantations, we can learn about the complete process: fruit harvesting, transportation, processing, and packaging. EARTH bananas are sent to markets in the United States and across Europe.

After lunch on campus, we visit the fruiting trees plantation academic area. We can learn about their extensive fruiting trees collection, from their farm manager and faculty.

Later we visit the Ethnobotanical Garden and learn about different plant properties and their medicinal use by locals.



Day 4, Tuesday, July 30: EARTH University (B/L)

After breakfast we return to Earth University for more education, including a rainforest walk. Their forest reserve encompasses 2,471 acres of primary and secondary forest for preservation of biodiversity, research, and student learning opportunities. The trek through the reserve consists of a 1.2 mile hike along the “Escalera de Mono” trail. It’s an experience in which all senses are put to the test. One can observe and listen to different types of animals and insects, while enjoying the different aromas and colors of the native plants in the humid tropics. Once partly used for logging, the area in which the reserve lies has recovered quickly, One may see a diverse selection of flora and fauna, including three of the four types of monkeys found in Costa Rica, 152 species of birds, ancient almond trees, various insects, tropical flowering plants, and more.

After lunch on campus, we depart on a scenic drive (1.5 - 2 hour) to the lovely, lakeside Casa Turire for two overnights. <https://www.hotelcasaturire.com/en/casa-turire-hotel.php>

The small, upscale hotel is built in the style of an hacienda and all rooms have a balcony for enjoying nature. It is located in the heart of the verdant Turrialba agricultural region. This beautiful place is bordered by La Angostura Lake, complete with WiFi, pool and bar. With time permitting, in the late afternoon we may visit a nearby sugar cane mill, a coffee facility where Costa Rica's superior beans are prepared, or a processing plant for the flavorful macademia nut.



Day 5, Wednesday, July 31: CATIE (B/L)

After breakfast and 15 - 20 minute drive, we have all day for touring and learning at the famous CATIE Tropical Agriculture Center. The research center spans 2,500 acres and features thousands of plant species from all over, including multiple varieties of cacao, palms and coffee. The grounds include a botanical garden, which boasts more than 4,400 genetic samples from 280 different plants as part of the Finca Cabiria experimental farm. The plants that make up this collection come from a number of different countries including Brazil, Tanzania, Mexico and Kenya.

While at CATIE we tour their botanical garden and enjoy tropical fruit tastings. The botanical garden, also allows the viewing endemic birds and serves as an introduction to plant life in the tropical climate.

We will also view the extensive collections located at the CATIE Tropical Agriculture Center. It has some 95 species of exotic trees and plants spread out across 25 acres of land. CATIE conserves thousands of genetic samples from various parts of the world. A major species conservation task, such as germplasm banks for plants from tropical America, constitutes a real treasure for CATIE in the field of crop research, preservation and improvement. This treasure consists of the International Coffee Collection, the International Cocoa Collection and the Germplasm Banks for peach palm, annatto, guava and exotic fruits.

We also learn about their The Forest Seed Bank which has an annual distribution of 8-12 tons of seeds to more than 15 countries.

You may be able to purchase seeds and bring them in legally with bring them in legally with a “small lots of seeds permit” from the USDA (www.aphis.usda.gov). *You must secure the permit in advance.*

Day 6, Thursday, August 1: Lankester Gardens (B/L)

After breakfast there is free time to enjoy the gardens and forests of Casa Turire or maybe arrange kayaking on Angostura Lagoon or horseback riding.

Late morning we depart (1 - 1.5 hour drivetime) for a private tour of the famous Lankester Gardens, started in the 1940's. The 27 acres of grounds contain trails and impressive display of more than 3,000 unique plant varieties in the gardens, including rare orchid species that most people will never see in their lifetimes. While the local animal life tends to be shy, you may catch glimpses of tree frogs, colorful birds and monkeys. The public garden functions also as a research center for the University of Costa Rica. The gardens feature bromeliads, palms and cacti growing amid secondary pre-montane forest, and many visitors come to Lankester to view the more than 1000 orchid species.



In the late afternoon, we have a 15 minute drive to the lovely Rio Perlas Resort and Spa for the overnight. <http://www.rio-perlas.com/en/overview/about-us>.

The Rio Perlas Resort is located on 270 acres of forest in the beautiful and verdant Orosí Valley. It is a 5-star hotel, containing a full service spa, bar, 2 large swimming pools, 2 restaurants and 65 suites. Built with colonial-style architecture in mind, the rooms are spread out, offering guests a unique sense of privacy, nature and tranquility. Laying at the intersection of Rio Perlas and Rio Navarro rivers, the resort is known as one of the most beautiful rainforest and mountain hotels in Costa Rica and is surrounded by forest views. It is close to the world famous Irazu Volcano, and borders with Tapanti National Park, that covers about 600 km² and forms a massive collection of nature parks that extends into Panamá. You can enjoy bathing in the naturally-fed thermal spring's swimming pool, containing natural waters from volcanic sources. The resort also offers a second, separate cold water refreshing swimming pool with, hot tubs. There is also a poolside bar and snacks counter located at the pools. Trout fishing options are offered at the on-site lake. Numerous hiking trails with waterfalls as well as bird-watching trails are all within the hotel grounds.



Day 7, Friday, August 2: Orosí Valley - San Jose (B/L)

After breakfast there is free time to relax and enjoy the gardens and forests of Rio Perlas Resort.

Midday, we depart to visit a feria, (or farmers markets) to see, taste, or buy from the variety of agricultural products; fruits, vegetables, food vendors, etc. Another great chance to sample many of the country's flavorful fruits.

We will avoid travel to Cartago today as it is a religious holiday (Virgen de los Angeles, Costa Rica's patron saint) and there may be more a 1 million people in downtown Cartago. It is an annual pilgrimage to the Lady of the Angels Basilica.

Taking back roads to various sight seeing places, we can still visit a beautiful village church, a strawberry farm enjoy a late lunch at a local restaurant popular for its delicious tortillas with cheese and "aguadulce," a sugarcane drink.

Later afternoon return to the Hotel Buena Vista in San Jose (about an 1.5 hour drive) for the overnight.



Day 8, Saturday, August 3: Departure (B)

Morning transfer to the SJO airport for international flights out.

INCLUDED

- All airport / hotel transfers as listed
- All lodging, including hotel taxes
- Private transportation and guides
- Meals as listed
- *(B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, Dinners are NOT included)*
- All tours as listed including entrance fees
- Gratuities for local guides
- Flights are NOT included. *(See in Notes re airfare.)*

YOUR COSTS

- The cost is \$1,800 per person in double occupancy.
- A single supplement is an additional \$450.
- A portion of your trip price includes a donation to your choice of non-profit organization.
- A deposit of \$300 per person is required to reserve, with balance due 90 days prior.
- The group is limited to 20 people.

YOUR ESCORTS

Throughout the tour, we will have the benefit of traveling with Gabriela Almengor. A “tica” (from Costa Rica), she is a biologist with more than 20 years experience guiding groups (including botanical tours). In addition to being a specialist in arthropods, Gabriel is also an accomplished musician and works with a Youth Orchestra. We are fortunate that her schedule accommodates our travel dates.

In addition to the local naturalist, this unique tour will be accompanied by anthropologist Charlie Strader, President of Explorations. A member of the Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club, Charlie is past president of the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society and the Bonita Springs Historical Society. His love and appreciation of foreign cultures and natural history started in the 1970’s with explorations into the Mundo Maya. He has travelled to Latin America well over 50 times and has organized custom tours for many nature organizations including eight tours for the Florida Native Plant Society since starting his own travel company, Explorations, in 1992. His expertise and knowledge will be a source of information throughout the trip.



TOUR NOTES:

Airfare & How do I get there? You should arrive into SJO airport in San Jose by late afternoon or evening of July 27th. You may depart SJO anytime on August 3rd. Let us know if you want to add extra days and services in Costa Rica. Once 10 or more people are registered for the tour, we can investigate group fares. For those coming from South Florida, currently some of the best pricing is on Southwest Airlines from Fort Lauderdale. Estimate \$350 to \$400 for roundtrip flights from Fort Lauderdale or Miami. We can look at ride sharing options from Fort Myers and Naples.



How is the weather ?

In Costa Rica the climate is a function of altitude and geographic region. Depending on the area, time of day, wind and sun factors, the temperature can range from the 60s°F to the mid 90s°F. The usual weather pattern is a lot of daytime sun with late afternoon clouds and chance of showers. (A couple days may be like Florida in the summer and the rest cooler.) Be prepared for rain during the trip by having a light raincoat or poncho.

What do I bring ?

Passport and money: A current Passport is required (check the expiration date, it must be valid for 6 months after departure date). Visas are not required for US citizens. You will get a tourist card on the flights. Whenever traveling, we strongly recommend that you keep your passport, credit cards and the bulk of your monies in an under-the-clothing traveler's purse or belt. Keep a photocopy of your passport's first two pages (6 copies are best), credit card, etc., in a separate location for safety. You can exchange some money in the Miami airport or wait until Costa Rica for better rate. Small US bills (undamaged and without ink marks) are easy to use and exchange. Visa and Mastercard are commonly accepted at restaurants and stores.

Baggage: You may want to try and keep baggage to a minimum, traveling light always seems to make things easier. We recommend one piece of luggage and one carry-on bag per person. The carry-on can be used to safeguard valuables during the flights and later as a day pack during outings.

Essentials: Bring comfortable walking shoes (tennis shoes are fine), extra pair of shoes or sandals, rain-gear, a hat, a swimsuit, flashlight with extra batteries, sunscreen, sunglasses and mosquito repellent. Bring a washcloth if desired and when traveling an extra hand towel is often handy. A small bottle for water, to keep in your day pack, is a good idea.



Clothing: Bring comfortable clothes that can be layered. Since much of the time is spent outdoors, casual dress is appropriate. Lightweight materials are best for the tropical climate as they wash and dry quicker. Laundry service is usually available at the hotels.

A more detailed list to assist in packing will be provided. Most important: bring a good attitude and adventurous spirit.

What about health?

No immunizations are required. You should check if your tetanus vaccination is current and ask about other vaccines appropriate for travel. The basic guidelines of good hygiene and common traveling sense, needed for any away-from-home trip, will help insure a healthier vacation. Some good guidelines are: If in doubt, drink only bottled or purified water. (Safe water is available at all locations.). If desired, bring Lomotil or antibiotics from your doctor and/or Pepto Bismol for symptoms. Avoid insect bites. (Skintastic & Deep Wood's Off pump spray is recommended.) Wash your hands frequently. Watch your step. Do not get sunburned.

Important Note: We strongly recommend that you purchase special travel insurance coverage. Upon registration we will send a information for such trip insurance.

What about electricity and camera equipment?

The voltage in Costa Rica is usually 110 volts, the same as the USA. Bring sealable plastic bags to protect equipment and supplies from moisture.

Taxes:

Not included are the Costa Rican departure taxes, estimate \$30 in cash per person upon leaving. This tax is often included in your airline ticket. You will need to confirm with your airline.

This tour may be viewed online at:

<https://www.explorationsinc.com/costa-rica-fruit-tour.html>

For more information or to register, please contact Charlie Strader at charlie@ExplorationsInc.com or 239-992-9660.



www.Explorationsinc.com

RESERVATION FORM

TO REGISTER:

Complete and sign form below and send with a check (or use Paypal) for appropriate deposits, made payable to:

EXPLORATIONS INC., 27655 KENT RD, BONITA SPRINGS, FL 34135-6248

Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Upon receipt of your deposit, an invoice will be sent showing your balance and due date. Please verify all information and call if you have any comments or questions.

NOTE: A current Passport is required, (valid for 6 months after return date.) If you do not have your passport number at time of registration, you may call us at a later time.

Trip / Tour Name (s): _____

Start / dates: _____

Name(s) (As per passport):

1. _____ Birthdate _____ Email _____

Passport: Country _____ Number _____ ExpirationDate _____ Occupation _____

2. _____ Birthdate _____ Email _____

Passport: Country _____ Number _____ ExpirationDate _____ Occupation _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone () _____

ACCOMMODATIONS:

I will share with _____ . I prefer a single accommodations.

Please arrange a roommate if possible. I am Male ___ Female ___ Smoker ___ Non-smoker ___

AIR TRANSPORTATION: (Please coordinate flights before purchase, or you may request a quote.)

Arrange all round-trip air transfers from _____ (city or airport).

Arrange only the in-country domestic flights. I(We) will make independent international flight arrangements.

Do not include the in-country domestic flights. I(We) will coordinate and arrange domestic flights before purchase.

DEPOSITS ENCLOSED:

Per person (TBD, amounts vary by tour): _____

SPECIAL REQUESTS (Medical, dietary, trip extensions, etc): _____

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Explorations Inc., and its associates are not responsible for any loss due to theft, personal injury, flight or weather delays, negligence or default of suppliers, or suppliers changing of itineraries. Explorations Inc and its associates are not responsible for any loss due to travel/flight delays or changes in travel plans due to Acts of God or other unforeseen circumstances, nor are we responsible for medical care. Tour services are furnished by independent contractors who are not agents or servants of Explorations Inc. Refunds are not available for ticketed air or unused portions of the tour. **Cancellation fees** per person are normally: \$200 with notice more than 90 days prior to departure; \$400 plus any lost costs to suppliers at 90-30 days prior; \$500 plus any lost costs to suppliers at 30-15 days prior and no guaranteed refunds at 14-0 days prior. If trip is cancelled by Explorations Inc., all received monies will be refunded. Trip cancellation and emergency medical insurance is highly recommended. **If you have any questions regarding these terms or would like business and previous client references - please call!**

SIGNATURE(S) _____

DATE: _____

