

COSTA RICA

A DESTINATION BY THE STORYTELLERS MTL



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Have a nice trip!



@thestorytellers_mtl



Foreword

WHY COSTA RICA?

After exploring several countries in Europe, we wanted to get out of our comfort zone. We wanted to live a totally different adventure. Not being great fans of the Canadian winter, we jumped at the opportunity when we saw that Costa Rica was offering airplane tickets at an almost ridiculous price even in the middle of December.

We initially feared that the country had become too Americanized due to a dazzling rise in its popularity with backpackers in recent years.

To our delight, we were mistaken. The villages we discovered and the people we met made us fall in love with this exceptional country.

Costa Rica is an authentic country, rich in culture and vegetation, but especially in varied and exhilarating experiences. This little bit of country has a lot to teach us about our unbridled lifestyle and our vision of life.

It is a country where every detour brings its share of surprises and hidden treasures and where every day is a celebration! We hope that this little guide will make you want to go on the adventure and will allow you to explore this beautiful country in your way.

This collection is meant to be a practical travel tool where we will give you our favorites and disappointments in all honesty.

WHO ARE WE ?

The Storytellers MTL is an idea that is not new. Since the beginning of our love story, we have always been driven by the passion of travel.

Like most people of our age, we are eager for adventures. We believe that each journey changes us for the best and brings us something unique.

So we created a platform to share our love of travel with other adventure enthusiasts. You can also follow our stories on Instagram @thestorytellers_mtl.



Both Law graduates, at the end of our studies, we decided to leave the beaten path and create a dream job for ourselves.

Why? Because we wanted to be able to continue exploring the world by doing something that fascinates us. The planet is our office and work becomes the vessel of our ambitions and not strictly an obligation.



Essentials in your suitcase

WHAT TO BRING?

As the climate can change very quickly depending on the altitude you are in, you absolutely must have a raincoat or a poncho in your bag.

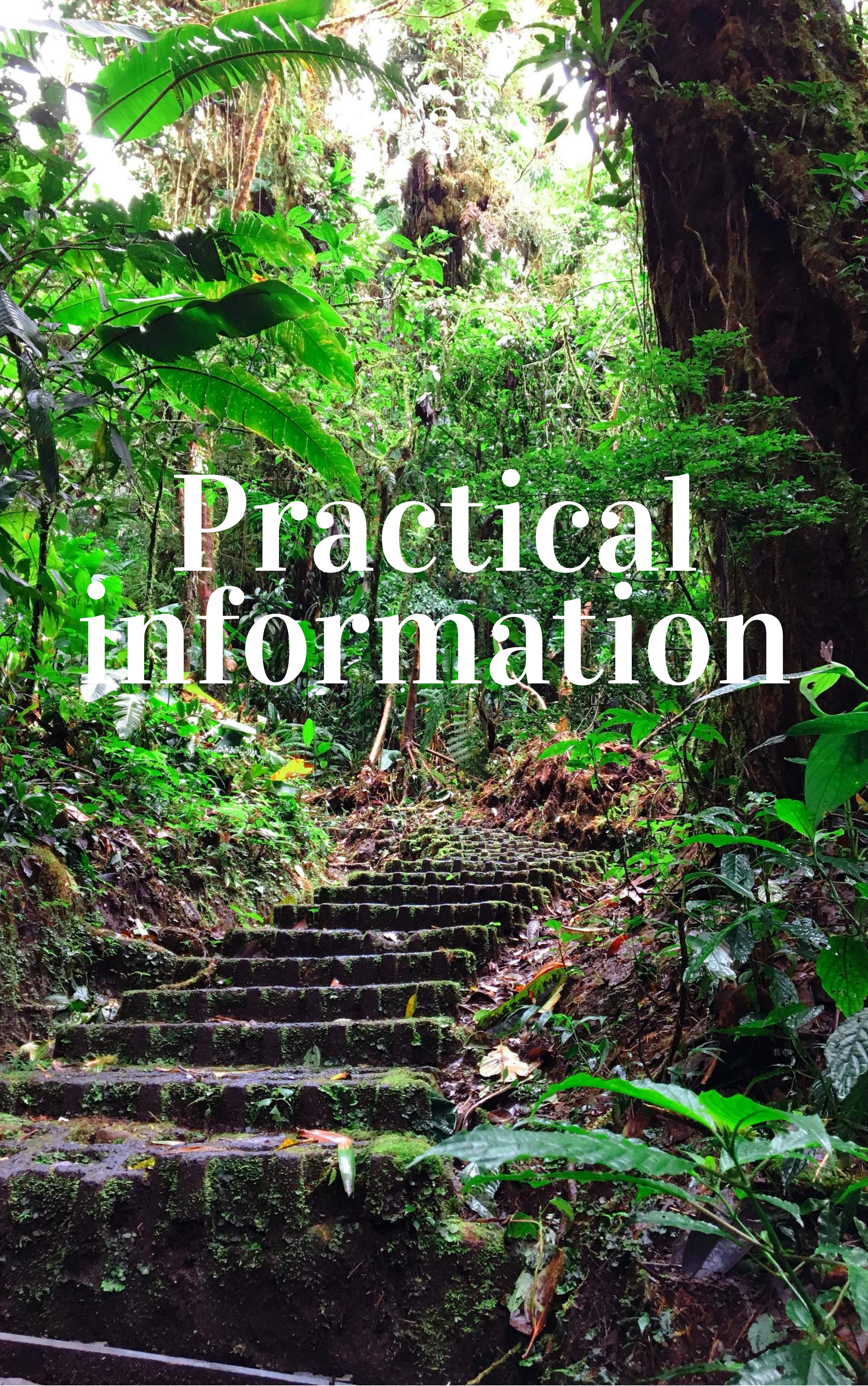
Generally, places to visit are located in tropical forests. So, bring a good pair of walking boots, because not all tourist attractions have trails maintained.

If you are traveling by car, always have some money at hand to pay the tolls you will come across (the most expensive one we met was 450 colonès).

US money is used, but all the prices and the currency you will receive in return will be in colonès. Most restaurants also take credit cards like Visa and MasterCard.

The main roads are very well maintained and there are good indications on the motorways for the main tourist places. On the other hand, a GPS can be very convenient, because several attractions are located in the mountains or on more bumpy terrain.

As running water is potable in Costa Rica, bring a reusable bottle to fill it during your adventures. This way, you will save money on disposable bottles and you will always have water to hydrate you after a hike in the rainforests.



Practical
information

Car rental is a must if you want to visit all the main attractions (Rio Celeste, Arenal Volcano, Manuel Antonio, Jaco, Montezuma, Monteverde, La Paz, etc.). You will have to do a lot of driving since the majority of the attractions are located at a 2-3h (average) drive from each other.

Even if it is an extra expense, you can discover the whole country and immerse yourself in the culture and the specific environment of each region.

If you are a roadtrip enthusiast, you will be well served by crossing Costa Rica. The stunning landscapes worthy of Jurassic Park that you will come across are worth it, we promise!



CLIMATE

We will not lie to you, we often choose our destinations according to the price of the plane tickets.

On our way to Costa Rica in the middle of December, we knew we were coming to the very end of the rainy season. We also knew that the risks of precipitation were quite high, but as they say no risk, no gain.

On the other hand, since the regions and the villages are located at different elevations, it is good to know that no matter the season, the temperature in Costa Rica varies greatly according to the different ecosystems.

In general, the mornings are always very sunny and warm.

We are not morning people either, but if you want to make the most of your days, we advise you to get up at the same time as the sun and start your activities very early. In any case, many Costa Ricans have roosters, which will allow you to wake up without even using your regular snooze.

Towards the middle of the afternoon, the clouds begin to show and the showers begin.

Before leaving for Costa Rica, you must be prepared for the weather because, considering the distance from some activity sites, you will have no choice but to be out in the afternoon.

Generally, with moisture and condensation, bad weather dissipates during the evening. You will be able to dine outdoors when Mother Nature feels lenient.

LANGUAGE

In retrospect, we should have taken some basic Spanish lessons before arriving in the country. Although part of the population understands English, knowing key phrases would not have been too much.

At times, we had to use resourcefulness to get us out of some comical situations. In fact, now we are laughing, but at the time, it was not always easy to be understood in English. French, we can forget that!

However, the locals are very friendly and will not hesitate to try to understand what you tell them and help you if you have difficulties in Spanish!



A vertical photograph of a tropical forest scene. In the center, a waterfall cascades over a series of large, moss-covered rocks. The water is white and frothy as it falls. The surrounding forest is dense with various types of trees and lush green foliage. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the rocks and water. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

Our favorites

MINAS DEL AGUACATE

After several days on the road, we wanted to take things more relaxed.

Our host told us about an abandoned mine a few minutes from our home. So we decided to go for a walk and see the supposed falls.

Arrived on the spot, we found a magnificent waterfall surrounded by greenery and rocks.

So we took off our shoes and climbed a bit to soak our feet in the water while resting on the rocks.

In life, sometimes the simplest things become the most memorable.

A simple mine abandoned for years can become a real oasis when nature decides to take possession of it.

(The mine is shown on the previous page)



TENORIO VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK

If time is short and you only have a waterfall to see, that's it!

The Rio Celeste fall is just beautiful. The water is turquoise blue which seems practically false as it is glowing with the sun's rays. The hike to get to the fall is not too tough and the path is well delimited.

Additionally, if the weather permits, you can continue on the trail and visit the aqua spring and a mirador that allows you to see the mountains in the middle of the rainforest. (12\$ for the entrance fee.)



SANTA ELENA CLOUD FOREST RESERVE

Beautiful rainforest called Cloud Forest because the altitude is so high that it is literally in the clouds. The trails are very well marked and the indications are very clear. There are several animals in the forest and several birds also.

In addition, there are about 4-5 trails of different lengths that allow you to see different views of the mountains. One of them even has an observation tower about ten meters high which allows to see above the trees. (14\$ for the entrance fee)



JACO

The city of Jaco is a bit like the Wildwood of Costa Rica. There is a main street with plenty of restaurants and shops. The beach at Jaco is beautiful and you can rent chairs and umbrella which are very useful, as the sun is sometimes very strong.

The beach is made up of small rocks to get to the water, but as soon as you approach the ocean, the sand is smooth and the water is excellent. You can park directly at the beach without having to pay a fee for parking.



JACO: SECRET SPOT

Also, close to Jaco, we passed by a small hill on the side of the road with ample space to park the car. After climbing to the summit, we arrived in front of an incredible view. There was the ocean as far as the eye could see and we could hear the sound of waves breaking on the rocks of another beach below.

If you are as lucky as us, you can see flights of Aras (Scarlet macaw) who like to fly there in pairs. Seeing them fly as a couple reminded us of the chance we had of traveling together and being able to experience magical moments like this.

Our unpopular





MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK

In our opinion, this national park is not worth the trouble. The entrance is more expensive than the Santa Elena reserve. Moreover, the Jaco beach is a hundred times prettier.

The beach in Manuel Antonio Park is beautiful, but it is infested with raccoons. In addition, they are so used to seeing people that they are no longer frightened and they are trying to take the contents of the tourist bags (this is the only time we were afraid of being robbed). Even if you push them back, it is almost certain that you will be disturbed by another.

During our stay there was no umbrella or chair on site. You will have to travel under the trees where the beach is filled with branches to be in the shade. No food or water is sold in the park so do not forget to have lunch or eat before you go!

A vertical photograph of a coastal scene. On the left, a steep hill covered in dense green forest slopes down towards a small, dark sandy beach. The beach is bordered by dark, jagged rocks. To the right, the ocean extends to the horizon under a heavy, overcast sky with grey and white clouds. White foam from waves is visible as they break against the rocks. The overall mood is serene and somewhat moody due to the weather.

Surf & chill

N A M A S T E

Costa Rica is renowned for its lush forests, breathtaking scenery and also an excellent place for yoga and surfing.

First of all, Montezuma Yoga is the place to go for yoga classes because it offers a la carte formula for tourists.

For the sum of 14\$, you can do your practice while watching the monkeys swinging between the branches and hearing the relaxing sound of the waves.

Montezuma Yoga also offers the possibility of making retreats for a few days in order to concentrate completely on the practice of yoga.

Also located in Montezuma, Anamaya Retreat Resort will give you the opportunity to do yoga and / or surf retreats.

In fact, the place is ideal because it allows to combine the two activities. In addition, yoga packages include meals and accommodation to maximize time to relax and let out the wrong energies.

The packages also offer several other activities to make you experience a rewarding and relaxing experience.



Finally, for surfing fans, you must visit Costa Rica Surf School.

The place is one of the first surf schools in the country. Experienced instructors will teach you the basics of this fascinating sport. It is also possible to do group surf camps to discover several spots that only the locals know.

In addition, the location of the school is ideal for beginners because it is located in an area where waves are easier for surfers.

On the other hand, a few steps away, the experts will also be able to put their talents to the test by facing more powerful waves.

A hand is holding a green coconut with a red hibiscus flower attached to it. A clear straw is inserted into the coconut. The background is a lush tropical setting with various green plants and leaves. The text "What to eat?" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font.

What to
eat?

TYPICAL FOOD OF COSTA RICA

The traditional food of Costa Rica is mostly made up of black beans, rice and fried plantain.

For lunch, you should definitely take a Gallo Pinto, a mixture of rice and beans accompanied by chunks of fried bananas, scrambled eggs, all served with natilla (sour cream).

You should definitely have a good coffee or a glass of freshly squeezed fruit juice to accompany your meal. If you are a coffee lover, you will be more than spoiled by this country that offers one of the best on the planet. Tasty and authentic!

For lunch, Costa Ricans do not deviate from their habits. Casados are the most popular dishes in all restaurants.

Again, the famous mix of rice, beans and plantains is present but this time, it will be accompanied either by a choice of chicken, beef, pork or fish. All will be served with a green salad, a piece of queso blanco (white cheese) and corn tortilla.

No matter what time of the day, you can buy a huge variety of fresh fruit from grocery stores, public markets or even on the roadside.

Whether bananas, pineapples, mangoes or papayas, all the choices of tropical fruits are within your reach. Do not miss the opportunity to savor a good coconut water directly picked from the nearby tree. One feels immediately reinvigorated, even in full heat wave!



Near Manuel Antonio National Park, you will come across several traditional and thematic restaurants. For our part, we came across the charm of El Avión restaurant.

This restaurant has an incredible history. The owners recovered the fuselage of a Fairchild C-123 freighter that had been abandoned during the Cold War era by the Reagan administration.

Today, the fuselage houses a two-storey restaurant, a bar and especially the most beautiful view of the area thanks to its location 150 meters above the beach.

In addition to its history and breathtaking views, the food is excellent and the cocktails are perfect after a hot day in the sun.



For a traditional experience, you have to stop at La Casita del Café, a small roadside restaurant in the region of Atenas.

In the morning, take the best fresh juice of your life with a typical country lunch that will give you the energy to spend a day full of adventures.

In addition to the food that is delicious, the main attraction of this restaurant is undoubtedly the spectacular view of the mountains. The large windows open onto a verdant valley, giving you a breathtaking view while enjoying your morning coffee.

OTHER OPTIONS

As for places to eat, you will find Sodas along the road which are small restaurants of a few places serving purely traditional food.

Costa Rica is also full of restaurants of all kinds that will serve casados, gallos pintos and even ceviches.

Fresh fish and seafood are widespread in the country due to its proximity to the Pacific and the Caribbean Sea.

Prices are not very high and usually you can get by for less than 15\$ per person for a full meal.

For those with a smaller budget or who want to cook, Costa Rica offers several grocery stores or public markets to fill your fridge with meat, fish and fresh fruit.

Several choices of grocery stores are available like Maxi Pali or Auto Mercado. Each city also has their little supermercados.

Finally, all the cities of the country set up a Feria del Agricultor which consists of a public market gathering farmers of the region and their products of a high quality.

Generally, the best time to go in these markets is Friday or Saturday morning.



Have a
nice trip!