**Costa Rica Facts and Culture**

* [Food and Recipes:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipes.htm) Breakfast and "morning coffee" vary depending on the person with the latest eating time about 10.30 a.m. Lunch is had... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipes.htm)
* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/family.htm) Extended family is the basis of society.  Several generations may live in the same house.  Visiting relatives is important and... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/fashion.htm) Western style clothing is worn. Clean, unwrinkled clothing is very important to urban working class. Generally jeans and shirts for... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/visiting.htm) "Personal space" of about 40 cm of distance between two people during converstation is common. Eye contact should be... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/visiting.htm)

**Costa Rica Facts**

Costa Rica stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital | San Jose |
| Government Type | democratic republic |
| Currency | CRC |
| Population | 4,695,942 |
| Total Area | 19,730 Square Miles 51,100 Square Kilometers |
| Location | Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama |
| Language | Spanish (official), English |

Map of Costa Rica



**Costa Rica Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

At 19,730 square miles, about four-fifths the size of West Virginia, Costa Rica is, with the exception of El Salvador and Belize, the smallest country in Central America. It is bounded on the North and Southeast by Nicaragua and Panama, respectively; on the East by the Caribbean Sea; and on the West and South by the Pacific Ocean. Limon, the major Caribbean port, is 2,400 miles from New York; Puerto Caldera, the principal Pacific port, is located 2,700 miles from San Francisco.

A rugged central massif runs the length of the country, north to south, separating the coastal plains. Even though Costa Rica lies totally within the tropics, the range of altitudes produces wide climatic variety. The country has four distinct geographic regions:

The Caribbean Lowlands are hot and humid, and comprise about one-fourth of the total area of Costa Rica. It is the major banana-exporting region. The lowlands contain less than 10 percent of the population.

The Highlands are the economic, political, and cultural heart of the country, and include the Central and Talamanca mountain ranges and the Meseta Central where the capital, San Jose, is located. The Meseta, with elevations ranging from 3,000 to 4,500 feet, and adjacent areas contain nearly two-thirds of Costa Rica’s population. The region has rolling, well-drained land, productive soil, and pleasant sub-tropical temperatures, with an annual rainfall of 60-75 inches. The central highlands have most of Costa Rica's improved roads, and there is direct access to both coasts by paved highway and air.

The Guanacaste Plains comprise the rolling section of northwest Costa Rica, and include portions of the provinces of Guanacaste and Puntarenas, plus the Nicoya Peninsula. Despite having the lowest average annual rainfall and the longest dry season, the region is important for agriculture and livestock production as well as a popular area for tourism. The area contains 15 percent of Costa Rica’s population.

Southern Costa Rica is the wettest part of Costa Rica with some 10 percent of the population.

San Jose, with a metropolitan population of over one million, is almost completely surrounded by mountains, and just a few minutes’ drive from the center of the city are foothills that offer a country atmosphere and lovely views.

The central part of the capital is divided into four quadrants by Avenida Central running east and west, and Calle Central running north and south. The arrangement of streets is logical, but initially confusing: Odd-numbered avenues (avenidas) are located north of Avenida Central and even-numbered avenues are to the south; odd-numbered streets (calles) are east of Calle Central, and even-numbered streets are to the west.

Street names or numbers are seldom used. Locations are given in relation to some landmark that may, or may not, be well known, such as a public building, a monument, a prominent intersection, or even a grocery store or gasoline station. Distances are expressed in meters (“metros” in Spanish), and 100 meters is roughly equivalent to a normal city block. At times, the point of reference is a landmark that once existed but no longer is standing, a practice that works for long-time residents of San Jose but generally adds to the considerable confusion.

Most city streets in San Jose are paved, but many are narrow and rough, and congestion and noise are constant problems in the city. The pollution at times can be stifling. Potholes are a constant threat to the unwary, both in the city and in the countryside, and often are deep enough to damage vehicles. Open manholes are a danger as well, since theft of manhole covers seems to be a favorite activity in San Jose.

Downtown commercial buildings usually have two or three stories, but newer structures are much taller. Residential sections have many modern homes of brick, wood, or concrete construction, with either tile or galvanized metal roofs. Large one-story or two-story residences are found in the suburbs where Embassy employees live. Parks of all sizes are located throughout the city.

**Geography - note**

four volcanoes, two of them active, rise near the capital of San Jose in the center of the country; one of the volcanoes, Irazu, erupted destructively in 1963-65

**Costa Rica Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location | Central America |
| Total Area | 19,730 Square Miles 51,100 Square Kilometers |
| Land Area | 19,714 Square Miles 51,060 Square Kilometers |
| Water Area | 15 Square Miles 40 Square Kilometers |
| Land Boundaries | 397 Miles 639 Kilometers |
| Irrigated Land | 398 Square Miles 1,031 Square Kilometers |
| Border Countries | Nicaragua 309 km, Panama 330 km |
| Coastline | 802 Miles 1,290 Kilometers |
| Geographic Coordinates | 10 00 N, 84 00 W |
| Terrain | coastal plains separated by rugged mountains including over 100 volcanic cones, of which several are major volcanoes |
| Highest Point | 3,810 Meters |
| Highest Point Location | Cerro Chirripo 3,810 m |
| Lowest Point Location | Pacific Ocean 0 m |
| Natural Resources | hydropower |

**Costa Rica Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Altitude determines the climate throughout Costa Rica. Areas below 3,000 feet have average annual temperatures of around 80°, with little variation from month to month. The temperature drops from around 74° at 3,000 feet to 59 degrees at 5,000 feet. Above 5,000 feet, the average annual temperatures can range as low as 40 degrees to the mid-50s, with occasional frost during the coolest months.

The temperature in San Jose is generally pleasant, with two seasons distinguished mainly by the rainfall. The dry season runs from December through April and the wet season extends from May through November. Even during the wet season the mornings generally are clear, with the afternoons and evenings dominated by heavy rains nearly every day. Relatively high winds often are present during the dry season.

The average temperature in San Jose is 70 to 75° Fahrenheit. In December, the coolest month, the average temperature drops to around 65°. Temperatures drop into the 50s at night throughout the year. Humidity in San Jose averages 80 percent annually.

**Costa Rica Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate | Altitude determines the climate throughout Costa Rica. Areas below 3,000 feet have average annual temperatures of around 80°, with little variation from month to month. The temperature drops from around 74° at 3,000 feet to 59 degrees at 5,000 feet. Above 5,000 feet, the average annual temperatures can range as low as 40 degrees to the mid-50s, with occasional frost during the coolest months.  The temperature in San Jose is generally pleasant, with two seasons distinguished mainly by the rainfall. The dry season runs from December through April and the wet season extends from May through November. Even during the wet season the mornings generally are clear, with the afternoons and evenings dominated by heavy rains nearly every day. Relatively high winds often are present during the dry season.  The average temperature in San Jose is 70 to 75° Fahrenheit. In December, the coolest month, the average temperature drops to around 65°. Temperatures drop into the 50s at night throughout the year. Humidity in San Jose averages 80 percent annually. |
| Terrain | coastal plains separated by rugged mountains including over 100 volcanic cones, of which several are major volcanoes |
| Natural Resources | hydropower |
| Natural Hazards | occasional earthquakes, hurricanes along Atlantic coast; frequent flooding of lowlands at onset of rainy season and landslides; active volcanoes |
| Irrigated Land | 398 Square Miles 1,031 Square Kilometers |
| Environmental Issues | deforestation and land use change, largely a result of the clearing of land for cattle ranching and agriculture; soil erosion; coastal marine pollution; fisheries protection; solid waste management; air pollution |
| Environment - International Agreements | party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands, Whaling   signed, but not ratified: Marine Life Conservatio |

**Costa Rica Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population | 4,695,942 |
| Population Growth Rate | 1.27% |
| Urban Population | 64.7% |
| Population in Major Urban Areas | SAN JOSE (capital) 1.515 million |
| Nationality Noun | Costa Rican(s) |
| Nationality Adjective | Costa Rican |
| Ethnic Groups | white (including mestizo) 94%, black 3%, Amerindian 1%, Chinese 1%, other 1% |
| Languages | Spanish (official), English |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change | 2.06% |

**Costa Rica Medical Information**

Costa Rica actively promotes medical tourism. While the perceived advantages are affordable costs, quality health care, and a chance to recuperate and have a vacation at the same time, there are also risks.   
  
Medical tourists should confirm that the facilities they intend to use are accredited and have an acceptable level of care. They should also purchase medical evacuation insurance before travelling, and should confirm that the cost and payment for their treatment is clearly understood by both parties. Persons with unpaid or disputed debts in Costa Rica may be legally prevented from leaving the country.  
  
In the event of unforeseen medical complications or malpractice, medical tourists may not be covered by their personal insurance or may not be able to seek damages through malpractice lawsuits. Although many hospitals and clinics abroad have medical malpractice insurance, seeking compensation can prove to be difficult because insurance laws and legal options may not exist. Be aware that if you should need or wish to be transferred to a hospital in the United States and do not have medical evacuation insurance, an air ambulance flight can cost upwards of US$20,000 and will often take place only after you (or your loved ones) have paid for it.  
  
Medical care in San Jose is generally adequate, but is limited in areas outside of San Jose. Most prescription and over-the-counter medications are available throughout Costa Rica. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services, and U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. A list of local doctors and medical facilities can be obtained from the U.S. Embassy in San Jose’s website.. An ambulance may be summoned by calling 911. Most ambulances provide transportation but little or no medical assistance.  
  
Malaria can occur in some rural locations, but is not commonly encountered. However, Costa Rica regularly experiences outbreaks of dengue fever in much of the country. Unlike some of the other mosquito-borne illnesses, there is no medical prophylactic or curative regimen for dengue. Travelers should take precautions against being bitten by mosquitoes to reduce the chance of contracting the illness, such as avoiding standing water, wearing long sleeves and pants in both day and night, and applying insect repellent regularly. On July 2, 2013, the Ministry of Health declared a health alert due to the increase in cases of dengue.

**Costa Rica Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP) | 10.9% |
| Death Rate/1,000 population | 4.44 |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate | 23.7% |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population | 1.2 |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population | 1.32 |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population | 8.95 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population | 8.09 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population | 9.76 |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years | 1.1% |
| Total Fertility Rate | 1.91 |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49) | 82.2% |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births | 40 |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate | 0.3% |
| HIV Aids Deaths | 300 |
| HIV Aids People Living With | 9,800 |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved | 3.4% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved | 90.9% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved | 99.6% |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved | 6.1% |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved | 94.9% |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved | 92% |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk | intermediate |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s) | bacterial diarrhea |
| Vectorborne Disease (s) | dengue fever |

**Costa Rica Crime**

**Crime Information**

Crime is a significant concern for Costa Ricans and visitors alike, and the Embassy reports a steady increase in crime. While the vast majority of foreign visitors do not become victims of crime, all are potential targets for criminals. Criminals usually operate in small groups, but may also operate alone. The most common crime perpetrated against tourists is theft, with thieves primarily looking for cash, jewelry, credit cards, electronic items and passports. Serious crimes, although less frequent, do occur. At least 7 U.S. citizens have been murdered in Costa Rica since January 2012. Daytime robberies in public places occur, and thieves are often armed and may resort to violence. Since January 2012, 21 U.S. citizens have reported to the Embassy that they were sexually assaulted, with at least six victims reporting that they were given date rape drugs. While the Costa Rican police claim to investigate all reported cases of rape, there have been no convictions in sexual assault cases of U.S. citizens since January 2012. .  
  
While crimes occur throughout Costa Rica, they are more prevalent at certain times and in certain areas. The downtown area of San Jose for example, is a prime tourist destination during daylight hours. You are strongly encouraged, however, not to go there after dark. U.S. government officials, in fact, are not permitted to stay in hotels in that area due to safety concerns. U.S. Embassy San Jose has received reports of a particularly high number of violent assaults and robberies in the Limon Caribbean costal region (from Tortuguero through Limon to Puerto Viejo), often involving invasions of rental homes and ecolodges, as well as attacks taking place on isolated roads and trails. If you plan to visit an unfamiliar area, you should consult with a trustworthy local (a concierge, a tour guide, etc.) regarding precautions or concerns.  
  
Thieves often work in groups to set up a victim. A prevalent scam involves the surreptitious puncturing of tires of rental cars, often near restaurants, tourist attractions, airports, or close to the car rental agencies themselves. When the travelers pull over, "good Samaritans" quickly appear to help change the tire - and just as quickly remove valuables from the car, sometimes brandishing weapons. Drivers with flat tires are advised to drive, if at all possible, to the nearest service station or other public area and change the tire themselves, watching valuables at all times. Another common scam involves one person dropping change in a crowded area, such as on a bus. When the victim tries to assist, a wallet or other item is taken.   
  
Take proactive steps to avoid becoming a crime victim. Do not walk, hike or exercise alone, and bear in mind that crowded tourist attractions and resort areas popular with foreign tourists are common venues for criminal activity. Ignore any verbal harassment, and avoid carrying large amounts of cash, jewelry, or expensive photographic equipment. You should be particularly cautious of walking alone at night and should not leave bars or restaurants with strangers. Additionally, do not seek entertainment in groups of people you do not know. Do not consume food or drinks you have left unattended, or accept food or drinks from "friendly" people. Costa Rican immigration authorities conduct routine immigration checks at locations such as bars in downtown San Jose and beach communities. U.S. citizens questioned during these checks who have only a copy of the passport may be asked to provide the original passport with appropriate stamps. Be sure you are certain of the location of your passport and will have ready access to it.  
  
Travelers renting vehicles should purchase an adequate level of locally valid theft insurance, park in secure lots whenever possible, and never leave valuables in their vehicles. Please note that there are unlicensed “parking attendants” that will occasionally assist you in parking; however, parking where they indicate does not always guarantee that it is a legal parking spot. Drivers should be cautious of where they park their cars. The U.S. Embassy receives several reports daily of valuables, identity documents, and other items stolen from locked vehicles, primarily rental cars. Thefts from parked cars can occur nearly anywhere, although cities, beaches and coastal towns, the airport, in front of restaurants and hotels, and national parks and other tourist attractions are common locations.  
  
U.S. government personnel are not permitted to travel on city buses due to safety concerns, and must use caution when traveling on any other buses. If you choose to travel by bus, you are encouraged to keep your bag with valuables and identification on your lap. Personal items are frequently stolen from buses. Do not store your bags or other personal belongings in the storage bins, as theft from overhead bins is common. You should keep your belongings in your line of sight at all times and your valuables in your possession. If you choose to help another passenger stow his belongings, you should be especially cautious that your own belongings are not being removed while you are doing so.  
  
Travelers should use only licensed taxis, which are typically red with medallions (yellow triangles containing numbers) painted on the side. Licensed taxis at the airport are painted orange. All licensed taxis should have working door handles, locks, seatbelts and meters (called "marias"); passengers are encouraged to use seatbelts.  
  
Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal in the United States, if you purchase them you may also be breaking local law.

**Costa Rica Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in Costa Rica, you are subject to its laws and regulations even if you are a U.S. citizen. Some laws in Costa Rica differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Costa Rica’s laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. The law permits pre-trial detention of persons accused of serious crimes. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Costa Rica are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with minors or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. It is also a crime in Costa Rica. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different than our own. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs could land you immediately in jail. You can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods. If you break local laws in Costa Rica, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It is very important to know what is legal and what is not where you are going.   
  
If you are arrested in Costa Rica, authorities are required to notify the U.S. Embassy of your arrest. If you are concerned the Department of State may not be aware of your situation, you should request the police or prison officials to notify the U.S. embassy of your arrest.

**Costa Rica Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth | 78 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female | 80 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male | 75 Years |
| Median Age (female) | 30 Years |
| Median Age (male) | 29 Years |
| Median Age | 29 Y |

**Costa Rica Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language | Spanish (official), English |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| Literacy Female | 96.1% |
| Literacy Male | 95.9% |
| Literacy Total | 94.9% |

**Costa Rica Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP | 6.3% |
| Literacy - female | 96.1% |
| Literacy - male | 95.9% |
| Literacy - total population | 94.9% |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| School Life Expectancy - female | 14 Years |
| School Life Expectancy - male | 13 Years |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary) | 1 |

**Costa Rica Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name | San Jose |
| Country Name | Costa Rica |
| Local - Long | Republica de Costa Rica |
| Full Country Name | Republic of Costa Rica |
| Local - Short | Costa Rica |
| Government Type | democratic republic |
| Capital - geographic coordinate | 9 56 N, 84 05 W |
| National Holiday | Independence Day, 15 September (1821) |
| Constitution | 7 November 1949 |
| Legal System | civil law system based on Spanish civil code; judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court |
| Suffrage | 18 years of age; universal and compulsory |

**Costa Rica Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch | chief of state: President Luis Guillermo SOLIS Rivera (since 8 May 2014); First Vice President Helio FALLAS Venega (since 8 May 2014); Second Vice President Ana Helena CHACÓN Echeverría (since 8 May 2014); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government   head of government: President Luis Guillermo SOLIS Rivera (since 8 May 2014); First Vice President Helio FALLAS Venega (since 8 May 2014); Second Vice President Ana Helena CHACÓN Echeverría (since 8 May 2014)   cabinet: Cabinet selected by the president   elections: president and vice presidents elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a single four-year term; election last held on 2 February 2014, with a runoff on 6 April 2014 (next to be held in February 2018)   election results: Luis Guillermo SOLIS Rivera elected president; percent of vote - Luis Guillermo SOLIS Rivera (PAC) 77.81%; Johnny ARAYA (PLN) 22.19% |
| Legislative Branch | unicameral Legislative Assembly or Asamblea Legislativa (57 seats; members elected by direct, popular vote to serve four-year terms)  elections: last held on 7 February 2010 (next to be held in February 2014)  election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PLN 23, PAC 10, ML 9, PUSC 6, PASE 4, other 5 |
| Judicial Branch | Supreme Court or Corte Suprema (22 justices are elected for renewable eight-year terms by the Legislative Assembly) |
| Regions or States | 7 provinces (provincias, singular - provincia); Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Limon, Puntarenas, San Jose |
| Political Parties and Leaders | Accessibility Without Exclusion or PASE [Oscar Andres LOPEZ Arias]; Citizen Action Party or PAC [Elizabeth FONSECA]; Costa Rican Renovation Party or PRC [Gerardo Justo OROZCO Alvarez]; Frente Amplio [Jose MERINO del Rio]; Libertarian Movement Party or PML [Otto GUEVARA Guth]; National Integration Party or PIN [Walter MUNOZ Cespedes]; National Liberation Party or PLN [Bernal JIMENEZ]; Patriotic Alliance [Mariano FIGUERES Olsen]; Popular Vanguard [Trino BARRANTES Araya]; Social Christian Unity Party or PUSC [Gerardo VARGAS] |
| International Organization Participation | BCIE, CACM, CELAC, FAO, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAES, LAIA (observer), MIGA, NAM (observer), OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, PCA, SICA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders | Authentic Confederation of Democratic Workers or CATD (Communist Party affiliate); Chamber of Coffee Growers; Confederated Union of Workers or CUT (Communist Party affiliate); Costa Rican Confederation of Democratic Workers or CCTD (Liberation Party affiliate); Costa Rican Exporter's Chamber or CADEXCO; Costa Rican Solidarity Movement; Costa Rican Union of Private Sector Enterprises or UCCAEP; Federation of Public Service Workers or FTSP; National Association for Economic Development or ANFE; National Association of Educators or ANDE; National Association of Public and Private Employees or ANEP; Rerum Novarum or CTRN (PLN affiliate) |

**Costa Rica Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product | $61,430,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - official exchange rate | $48,510,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - real growth rate | 3.5% |
| GDP Per Capita | $12,900.00 (USD) |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture | 6.2% |
| GDP by Sector- Industry | 21.3% |
| GDP by Sector- services | 72.5% |
| Population Below Poverty Line | 16% |
| Inflation Rate | 5.8% |
| Labor Force | 2,170,000 |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture | 14% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry | 22% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services | 64% |
| Unemployment Rate | 7.3% |
| Fiscal Year | calendar year |
| Annual Budget | $5,085,000,000 (USD) |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP | -5% |
| Public Debt (% of GDP) | 53.2% |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP | 14.8% |
| Major Industries | microprocessors, food processing, textiles and clothing, construction materials, fertilizer, plastic products |
| Industrial Growth Rate | 3% |
| Agriculture Products | coffee, pineapples, bananas, sugar, corn, rice, beans, potatoes; beef; timber |
| Currency Code | Costa Rican colon (CRC) |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14 | 5% |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14 | 39,082 |

**Costa Rica Economy**

**Economic Overview**

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. Foreign investors remain attracted by the country's political stability and high education levels, and tourism continues to bring in foreign exchange. Low prices for coffee and bananas have hurt the agricultural sector. The government continues to grapple with its large deficit and massive internal debt. The reduction of inflation remains a difficult problem because of rises in the price of imports, labor market rigidities, and fiscal deficits. Costa Rica recently concluded negotiations to participate in the US - Central American Free Trade Agreement, which, if ratified by the Costa Rican Legislature, would result in economic reforms and an improved investment climate.

**Costa Rica Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports | $10,010,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Exports | coffee, bananas, sugar; pineapples; textiles, electronic components, medical equipment |
| Top Export Partners | US 29.1%, Netherlands 8.2%, UK 4.2%, Mexico 4% |

**Costa Rica Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports | $13,320,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Imports | raw materials, consumer goods, capital equipment, petroleum |
| Top Import Partners | US 35.4%, Japan 4.3%, Mexico 3.9% |

**Costa Rica Flag**

The seven stars represent the seven provinces of Costa Rica and the volcanoes represent the geographical position of Costa Rica between the Pacific and Atlantic. The sun in a symbol of freedom and the ships symbolize commerce.

**Costa Rica Flag Description**

five horizontal bands of blue (top), white, red (double width), white, and blue, with the coat of arms in a white elliptical disk on the hoist side of the red band; above the coat of arms a light blue ribbon contains the words, AMERICA CENTRAL, and just below it near the top of the coat of arms is a white ribbon with the words, REPUBLICA COSTA RICA

**Costa Rica Interesting Facts**

* Costa Rica has one of world's largest varieties of flora and fauna.
* When a child loses a tooth the mother may take the tooth and have it plated with gold and made into an earring for the child to wear.
* During the fourth voyage to the New World in 1502 Christopher Columbus landed at "Cariari," known today as Puerto Limon. Christopher Columbus actually named Costa Rica (rich coast) under the assumption that the land was filled with precious metals.

**Costa Rica Lost Tooth Traditions**

The mother takes the tooth and has it plated with gold and made into an earring for the child to wear.

**History of Costa Rica**

In 1502, on his fourth and last voyage to the New World, Christopher Columbus made the first European landfall in the area. Settlement of Costa Rica began in 1522. For nearly three centuries, Spain administered the region as part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala under a military governor. The Spanish optimistically called the country "Rich Coast." Finding little gold or other valuable minerals in Costa Rica, however, the Spanish turned to agriculture.

The small landowners’ relative poverty, the lack of a large indigenous labor force, the population’s ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, and Costa Rica’s isolation from the Spanish colonial centers in Mexico and the Andes all contributed to the development of an autonomous and individualistic agrarian society. An egalitarian tradition also arose. This tradition survived the widened class distinctions brought on by the 19th-century introduction of banana and coffee cultivation and consequent accumulations of local wealth.

Costa Rica joined other Central American provinces in 1821 in a joint declaration of independence from Spain. Although the newly independent provinces formed a Federation, border disputes broke out among them, adding to the region’s turbulent history and conditions. Costa Rica’s northern Guanacaste Province was annexed from Nicaragua in one such regional dispute. In 1838, long after the Central American Federation ceased to function in practice, Costa Rica formally withdrew and proclaimed itself sovereign.

An era of peaceful democracy in Costa Rica began in 1899 with elections considered the first truly free and honest ones in the country’s history. This began a trend continued until today with only two lapses: in 1917-19, Federico Tinoco ruled as a dictator, and, in 1948, Jose Figueres led an armed uprising in the wake of a disputed presidential election.

With more than 2,000 dead, the 44-day civil war resulting from this uprising was the bloodiest event in 20th-century Costa Rican history, but the victorious junta drafted a constitution guaranteeing free elections with universal suffrage and the abolition of the military. Figueres became a national hero, winning the first election under the new constitution in 1953. Since then, Costa Rica has held 13 presidential elections, the latest in 2002.

TRANSLATE

**Costa Rica History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Costa Rica Year in History | Costa Rica Timeline |
| 1502 | **Christopher Columbus lands in Costa Rica.** He lands on the Caribbean shore on his fourth and last voyage to the New World. |
| 1540 | **Costa Rica becomes part of the vice-royalty of New Spain.** |
| 1808 | **Coffee plants are first brought to Costa Rica.** Brought from Cuba, coffee quickly becomes the principal crop. |
| 1821 | **Central America declares itself independent from Spain.** |
| 1823 | **Costa Rica joins the United Provinces of Central America.** The United Provinces include Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. |
| 1838 | **Costa Rica becomes fully independent.** |
| 1849 | **Costa Rica ousts William Walker.** He wants to extend slavery to Central American countries in an expression of Manifest Destiny. He invades and names himself president of Nicaragua. Costa Rica, with the help of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, defeated Walker and his supporters with 9,000 soldiers. |
| 1859 | **President Juan Rafael Mora is ousted from power.** After a failed attempt at a counter-coup, he is executed. |
| 1874 | **American businessman brings the United Fruit Company and banana cultivation to Cost Rica.** American businessman Minor Cooper Keith brings the United Fruit Company and banana cultivation to Cost Rica. Keith originally arrived to oversee construction of the Atlantic Railroad, which would connect the coffee producing central plateau with the Caribbean coast. |
| 1948 | **Civil War.** Rafael Angel Calderon Guradia refuses to step down for election winner Otilio Ulate. Don Pepe Figueres Ferrer leads the revolution against Calderon and topples the government after 40 days of fighting. |
| 1987 | **The Central American countries sign a peace plan.** Devised by Costa Rican president Oscar Arias Sanchez, it is signed by the Central American countries of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala which have been in the midst of civil wars. Arias wins the Nobel Peace Prize for his work. |
| 2006 | **Public workers strike in protest at free trade deal with the US.** Costa Rica is the only country in the region that has yet to ratify the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). |
| 2009 | **Costa Rica re-establishes ties with Cuba.** |
| 2012 | **Powerful earthquake** A powerful earthquake kills two people in the Nicoya peninsula, coinciding with the eruption of the San Cristobal volcano in neighboring Nicaragua. |

**Costa Rica Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| September 15th | **Independence Day** |
| December 25th | **Christmas** Beginning on Christmas Eve, churches observe the Prayer of the Rosary of the Holy Child, a celebration that extends until Candlemas (February 2). Families also observe this prayer before their private *portals* (Nativity Scenes).  Food for special holiday meals includes *tamales* (corn dough with meat filling and spicy sauce wrapped in plantain leaves and steamed), *chica* (liquor with ginger spice), *escabeche* (vinegar relish of carrots, peppers, onions, cauliflower, and green beans) eggnog, and *queque Navideno* (Christmas Cake).  Just before New Year's eve the Festival of Lights is held in San Jose. The festival includes parades with tropical floats, fireworks, clowns, cartoon characters, and goblins, culminating in a grand street carnival. El tope is a horse parade on Saint Stephen's Day. This parade features horses imported from Peru and Spain. In the parade children ride with their parents. |

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**Costa Rica Meals and Food**

Recipes from Costa Rica

* [Arroz A Lo Tico (Rice with Vegetables) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/arroz-a-lo-tico-rice-with-vegetables.htm)
* [Coconut Shrimp - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/coconut-shrimp.htm)
* [Costa Rican Terrine with Coconut-Date Vinaigrette - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/costa-rican-terrine-with-coconut-date-vinaigrette.htm)
* [Creole Chicken - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/creole-chicken.htm)
* [Ensalada de Repollo (Cabbage Salad) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/ensalada-de-repollo-cabbage-salad.htm)
* [Enyucados - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/enyucados.htm)
* [Gallo Pinto (Mixture of Rice and Black Beans) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/gallo-pinto-mixture-of-rice-and-black-beans.htm)
* [Mesclun Salad with Goat Cheese and Cider Vinaigrette - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/mesclun-salad-with-goat-cheese-and-cider-vinaigrette.htm)
* [Onion, Potato and Palmito Tortilla - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/onion-potato-and-palmito-tortilla.htm)
* [Sopa de Frijoles Negros (Black Bean Soup) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/sopa-de-frijoles-negros-black-bean-soup.htm)
* [Stuffed Chayotes - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/stuffed-chayotes.htm)
* [Tamales - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/tamales.htm)
* [Vigorón - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/CostaRica/recipe/vigoron.htm)

**Costa Rica Recipes and Diet**

Costa Rica food and meal customs

**Diet**

Vigorón is a dish imported for Nicaragua, Costa Rica's neighbor country.

**Meals**

Breakfast and "morning coffee" vary depending on the person with the latest eating time about 10.30 a.m. Lunch is had between 11:30 a.m.-1:30 PM. "Afternoon coffee" is at about 3:30 PM-5:30 PM and dinner at around 7:30 PM

At mealtimes the "coffees" and lunch are generally eaten out of the house. Children will eat them at school, workers normally eat lunch from home in the cafeteria, and bureaucrats will generally eat at restaurants. Dinner is mostly eaten at home.

**Costa Rica Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish (official), English

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Costa Rica Clothing and Fashion**

Western style clothing is worn. Clean, unwrinkled clothing is very important to urban working class. Generally jeans and shirts for young men, stretch jeans and tank tops for young women. Otherwise khakis and shirts for men and skirts/pants and  
blouses for women. Some areas require girls to wear uniforms to school.

**Dating, Family and Children Costa Rica**

**Family and Children**

Extended family is the basis of society.  Several generations may live in the same house.  Visiting relatives is important and done often. Divorce once seen as a disgrace is growing, but separation and desertion is more common.  Parents of newborn children receive gifts from relatives and neighbors. The godparents traditionally take the infant to church for baptism.  A middle or upper-class girl's fifteenth (15) birthday is a special occasion called quince and is celebrated with a large party. Funerals by law are required to be held within 24 hrs of death.

**Costa Rica Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

The typical greeting phrases throughout the day are: ¿Qué mae, tuanis? ¿Todo   
bien? ¿Pura Vida?, which are used among young people or in closer social   
circles. More formally, in the morning people would generally say "Buenos   
días", whereas in the evening it would be "Buenas noches". In the afternoon   
people will greet each other saying "Buenas tardes". The most common one,   
however, would be "Buenas" throughout the entire day.

**Gestures**

Men greet each other by shaking hands, and, if in a friendlier environment,   
they will generally pat each other on the shoulder and/or hug each other.   
Women are greeted with a kiss on the cheek.

**Visiting**

"Personal space" of about 40 cm of distance between two people during converstation is common. Eye contact should be held, whereas physical   
contact is avoided. Patting someone on the shoulder, putting one's   
hand on another persons hand are only appreciated after a certain degree of   
intimacy is achieved. Men avoid physical contact with each other, whereas women tend to touch each other on the arms or shoulders more. Public displays of affection among couples are common.

Normally, people socialize in bars or restaurants, but also at the football (soccer) stadiums. If anyone visits without previous notice, the host wouldn't   
generally turn him away, and there would be some certain degree of resentment if the host did.

**Cultural Attributes**

People generally work in order to secure financial stability. Getting a car   
and/or a house is the main goal of the average Costa Rican worker. Wealth would be measured in the kind and number of cars one has, the size of the house, the area where one lives in, and of course the position one has at a workplace. The poorest members of society wish for the things by which wealth is measured; that is cars, money and real estate.

**Costa Rica Church and Religion**

Forty seven percent of the population identify themselves as practicing Roman Catholics, 25 percent consider themselves nonpracticing Roman Catholics, 13 percent say they are evangelical Protestants, 10 percent do not have a religion, and 5 percent declare that they belong to "another religion."   
  
Apart from the dominant Catholic religion, there were several other religious groups in the country. Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and other Protestant groups had significant membership. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (Mormons) have a temple in San Jose that served as a regional worship center for Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Although they represented less than one percent of the population, Jehovah's Witnesses had a strong presence on the Caribbean coast. Seventh-day Adventists operated a university that attracted students from throughout the Caribbean Basin. The Unification Church maintained its continental headquarters for Latin America in San Jose. Non-Christian religious groups, including Judaism, Islam, Taoism, Hare Krishna, Scientology, Tenrikyo, and the Baha'i Faith, claimed membership throughout the country, with the majority of worshipers residing in the Central Valley (the area of the capital). While there was no general correlation between religion and ethnicity, indigenous peoples were more likely to practice animism than other religions.   
  
Foreign missionaries and clergy of all denominations worked and proselytized freely. Mormons had the most active mission program. Many churches had short-term missions that could last a month or less and comprise up to twenty persons.   
  
The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.   
  
The constitution provides the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government generally observed and enforced this provision. In the event of a violation of religious freedom, a victim may file a lawsuit with the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court. A victim may also file a motion before the Constitutional Chamber to have a statute or regulation declared unconstitutional. Additionally, a victim may appeal to the Government's administrative court for permission to sue the Government for alleged discriminatory acts. Laws are generally applied and enforced in a rigorous and nondiscriminatory fashion.   
  
While the constitution establishes Catholicism as the state religion and requires that the state contribute to its maintenance, it also prohibits the state from impeding the free exercise of other religions that do not impugn universal morality or proper behavior. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for managing the Government's relationship with the Catholic Church and other religious groups in the country.   
  
The law allows for the Government to provide land to the Catholic Church. This practice was established in part to restore the Church's land seized by the Government during the nineteenth century. Although records of these seizures existed and were being relied upon for certain land restoration cases, the Government also has a constitutional obligation to support the Church as the official state religion. Land conveyance takes two forms: right of development grants, with ownership retained by the state, and outright title grants, a method commonly used to provide land for the construction of local churches. These methods did not meet all the needs of the Church, which also buys some land outright. Government-to-church land transfers are not covered under any blanket legislation but rather by specific legislative action once or twice per year.   
  
Besides notary publics, only officials of the Catholic Church can perform marriages that are automatically recognized by the state. Other religious groups can perform wedding ceremonies, but the marriage must then be legalized via a civil union. Couples may also choose to have only a civil ceremony.   
  
Various traditional Catholic religious holy days are considered national holidays; including Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Our Lady of Los Angeles (August 2). Christmas is also a national holiday. However, if an individual wishes to observe another religious holy day, the labor code provides the necessary flexibility for that observance upon the employer's approval.   
  
The Government does not require religious groups to register, nor does it inhibit the establishment of religious groups through taxation or special licensing requirements. Such groups may incorporate to acquire legal status and must have a minimum of twelve members to do so. As stipulated in the law governing associations, religious groups must register to be eligible for residence permits for their missionaries and employees and to petition for legal recognition of religious holidays. Also, religious groups, as any other association, must register with the Public Registry of the Justice Department if they are involved in any type of fund raising activity.  
  
According to the General Directorate of Immigration, applications by foreign missionaries seeking permission to work in the country are studied on a case-by-case basis. They may be given a temporary permit that is granted for a maximum, nonrenewable term of six months. The missionary may enter the country as a tourist and then apply for the permit upon arrival. Alternatively, foreign missionaries may apply for an annually renewable temporary residence. This status is granted by a special migration council that consists of representatives from the Ministries of Public Security, Foreign Affairs, Labor, and Justice. In either case, missionaries must be accredited to an officially recognized church to receive the permit.   
  
Catholic religious instruction is provided in the public schools; however, it is not mandatory. Students may obtain exemptions from this instruction with the permission of their parents. The school director, the student's parents, and the student's teacher must agree on an alternative course of instruction for the exempted student during instruction time. Religious education teachers in public schools must be certified by the Catholic Bishops' Conference, which does not certify teachers from other religious groups.   
  
According to the education code, the Catholic Church has sole authority to select teachers of religion within the public school system. The Church maintains an office within the Ministry of Education expressly to carry out this function. According to the Department of Religious Education, only Catholic University graduates are eligible to teach religion in public school.   
  
Private schools are free to offer any religious instruction they choose. Parents do not have the option of home schooling their children.   
  
Applications to establish a place of worship must be submitted to the local municipality and must comply with safety and noise regulations as established by the general health law. In the past, several evangelical churches were closed by municipalities, local health departments, or police as a result of noise violations. Representatives from the Evangelical Alliance Federation alleged that the noise pollution claims were baseless and that local officials closed down the churches simply because they did not like them. The President's Office was working with the Health and the Housing Ministries to draft regulations regarding the building codes for places of worship that would apply to all places of worship, regardless of their religious affiliation. The Human Rights Ombudsman reported that adequate regulations were already in place but stated that the Government must work on equitable enforcement of the regulations so as not to appear to favor any particular religion.   
  
Despite the official status of the Catholic Church, the constitution prohibits clergymen or secular individuals from engaging in political propaganda motivated by religion. There is no prohibition on clergymen or other religious individuals serving in political office; however, the constitution establishes that the president, vice president, cabinet members, and Supreme Court justices may not be members of the clergy

**Costa Rica Sport and Recreation**

Football(soccer) is the national sport. Children will normally play it at school,  
but they also play it in parks with their friends. Bicycling, boxing and wrestling are popular working-class sports.  Basketball and tennis are played by upper-middle class boys.