

COSTA RICA

January 18, 2019 - 15 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person:

\$6995 double/twin

\$8360 single

tour
a more intimate travel experience



> Please add 0.1% GST.

> **Early Bookers:** \$300 discount on first 8 seats; \$150 on next 4

> **Experience Points:** Earn 133 points from this tour.

Redeem **133 points** if you book by **October 10**.

Includes

- Transportation to/from Victoria Airport
- Flight from Victoria to San Jose, Costa Rica
- Current air taxes, fees and fuel surcharges
- 14 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Coach transportation throughout Costa Rica
- Expert local guides and naturalists
- Doka Coffee Plantation
- Poas Volcano National Park
- La Paz Waterfall Garden
- River cruise through Tortuguero National Park to Pachira Lodge and return
- Wildlife and birdlife watching boat tour along the Tortuguero Canals
- Arenal Volcano National Park
- Arenal Volcano Sky Tram
- Nature walk on Las Coladas trail
- Tabacon Hot Springs
- Rincon de la Vieja National Park
- All-inclusive beachfront resort for 3 nights/2 days
- Flight from Liberia to Victoria
- Luggage handling at hotels and flights
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers and naturalists
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- **37 meals:** 13 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 13 dinners

102 - 736 Broughton Street
Victoria, BC V8W 1E1
www.wellsgraytours.com

victoria@wellsgraytours.com
Toll Free > 888-595-7889
Phone: > 250-590-7889



COSTA RICA

Costa Rica covers a mere 0.03% of the planet's surface, but is home to 5% of all living organisms on earth. Active volcanoes, lush cloud forests, lowland jungles, rolling savannas, and coral beaches create a spectacular setting to experience the country's natural beauty and exotic flora and fauna. Much of this area is preserved by one of the most remarkable park systems in the world, making Costa Rica a model for conservation in harmony with community development and economic growth. During this unique tour, we travel through some of the richest habitats of Costa Rica, from Caribbean lowland rain forests to central volcanic highlands, from a cloud forest interior to coastal resorts.

The tour is accompanied throughout by a Wells Gray tour director. Costa Rican guides and naturalists meet us at various times to conduct in-depth experiences. A variety of hotels are arranged such as the Crowne Plaza in bustling San Jose, remote Pachira Lodge at Tortuguero, the Arenal Kioro with panoramic views of the volcano, and the Borinquen Mountain spa resort with volcanic mineral mud pools.

One highlight of the tour is our three-night stay at Barcelo Occidental Hotel at Tamarindo Beach on the Pacific Ocean. You will be awed by the natural beauty of this private tropical resort and have plenty of time to relax and soak up the sun. The resort is all-inclusive so meals, drinks and most activities are complimentary.

Come and admire the natural wonders of Costa Rica and get away from a Canadian winter for two relaxing weeks.

Itinerary

Friday, January 18:

A transfer is provided to the airport. We fly on Westjet from Victoria to Toronto and stay overnight at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel in Terminal 3.

Saturday, January 19:

Meals: D

We go downstairs and check in at Westjet for the ongoing flight to San Jose. **Welcome to Costa Rica.** We stay two nights at Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Sunday, January 20:

Meals: B,L,D

Today's tour visits some of the highlights surrounding **San Jose**. First, we visit Doka Coffee Plantation for a delicious breakfast and a coffee tour where we learn the techniques used by the experts to produce one of the best coffees in Costa Rica. The careful process involved in the cultivation, harvesting, and roasting of the Golden Bean is demonstrated, then we savour the delectable end product. We continue to the **Poás Volcano** where we not only admire the impressive main crater with its sulphur fumaroles, but also learn about the different ecosystems in this unique national park. (Note: Poás has been erupting since spring 2017 and the park may be closed if this continues into 2019.) At **La Paz Waterfall Garden**, we visit the spectacular waterfall in the middle of the rainforest, the hummingbird gallery, the bird house, the butterfly garden, and the frog exhibit.

Monday, January 21:

Meals: B,L,D

We stop for breakfast en route to Guápiles. Then we board a river boat which takes us down the winding Tortuguero River through the ecological

diversity of **Tortuguero National Park** with lots of birdlife and wildlife viewing. After a two-hour journey, we arrive at remote **Pachira Lodge**, located in the jungle on one of the Tortuguero waterways, and lunch is waiting. During the afternoon, we boat across the canal to visit the colourful village of Tortuguero. We learn about renowned naturalist Archie Carr, author of the 1956 book *The Windward Road*, who studied sea turtles at Tortuguero and was instrumental in establishing the Caribbean Conservation Corporation.

Tuesday, January 22:

Meals: B,L,D

We take a boat tour along the **Tortuguero Canals** early this morning when the birdlife and wildlife are most active. It is a unique paradise of magnificent flora and fauna. We return to the lodge for breakfast, then enjoy the hotel grounds and jungle trails at leisure, or simply relax. Later, a nature walk gives a better understanding of rainforests.

Wednesday, January 23:

Meals: B,L,D

We return to Guápiles by boat and vehicle, then continue to La Fortuna de San Carlos, a small town located at the base of **Arenal Volcano**. Standing prominently at 1,636 metres, it was one of the 10 most active volcanoes in the world until 2010 with constant lava flows and eruptions. Today, the volcano is dormant, but its perfect cone shape and superb hot springs make this place a must-visit! Our accommodation for three nights is at **Arenal Kioro**, a splendid hotel surrounded by gardens and two streams with panoramic views of the volcano.

Thursday, January 24:*Meals: B,L,D*

We board the **Arenal Sky Tram** for a slow-paced journey through the rainforest with awesome views of the volcano during the ascent. Each gondola is accompanied by a bilingual guide and it can be stopped anytime for a special picture or if a bird or animal is spotted. At the top, there is an observation deck with a panoramic vista of the Arenal Volcano's southern face, Lake Arenal far below, and the rolling hillsides around it. The afternoon is leisure time at the hotel.

Friday, January 25:*Meals: B,D*

The morning is free time, then we drive to the western side of Arenal Volcano where most of the activity since 1968 has occurred. There is a choice of walks. The Las Coladas trail traverses the rainforest and crosses over a large lava flow from 1992 where we can observe all the impact of recent eruptions, and the Los Tucanes trail passes through the regrowing forest where we can see more wildlife. There is a shopping opportunity in La Fortuna. Later we visit **Tabacón Hot Springs**, one of the best in the country, where you can relax in the thermal waters.

Saturday, January 26:*Meals: B,L,D*

This morning's drive goes from Arenal to **Rincon de la Vieja National Park**. This 35,000 acre park is home to an intriguing combination of volcanic geological wonders and pristine tropical forests that span six life zones. The main attraction is Rincon de la Vieja, a smooth cinder cone volcano which rises to 1,884 metres and comprises nine contiguous craters. Tropical forests, including sections of montane and dwarf cloud forest, span the park's base, providing safe haven for a host of flora and fauna. Mammals include pumas, jaguar, monkeys (howler, spider, and white-faced), kinkajous, sloths, and tapirs. We have a midday arrival at **Borinquen Mountain Resort** and the afternoon is free time. It is located in a lush rainforest with grand waterfalls, natural mineral hot springs, and sparkling streams. Soak in the hot springs pools and fresh water pool, or wander the botanical gardens.

Sunday, January 27:*Meals: B,L,D*

The centerpiece of the resort is the thermal springs with hot pools, volcanic mineral mud, and natural steam rooms. Enjoy the relaxing experience of a volcanic mud treatment at the spa, then soak in the natural spring-water hot pools. The facilities are complimentary and professional spa services are charged extra. For an extra fee, you can ride the zipline with 18 platforms and 12 cables.

Monday, January 28:*Meals: B,L,D*

We descend from the mountains, driving past huge ranches and lots of cattle, to the Pacific Coast and the **Guanacaste** region. Local delicacies are corn tortillas or horchata beverages. On arrival at Tamarindo Beach, we settle into **Barcelo Occidental Tamarindo Hotel** for three nights. You will be awed by the natural beauty of this private tropical resort, located on a stunning white sand beach. There is plenty of time to relax and soak up the sun. The resort is all-inclusive so meals, drinks and most activities are complimentary, and there is a choice of two restaurants and several bars. Other facilities are pool, Jacuzzi, casino, theatre for stage shows, shops, beauty salon, full-service spa, medical service, and car rental. Daily activities include tennis, table tennis, fitness, aerobics, dance classes, volleyball, football, chess, archery, and darts. The town of Tamarindo is two km away and has plenty of shops and entertainment.

Tuesday, January 29:*Meals: B,L,D***Wednesday, January 30:***Meals: B,L,D*

These two days are free for you to decide what you want to do or simply relax by the pool or the ocean.

Thursday, January 31:*Meals: B,L,D*

In mid-day, we drive to **Liberia** and stay overnight at the Hilton Garden Inn. Our farewell dinner is a chance to reminisce with fellow travellers about our winter getaway to Costa Rica.

Friday, February 1:*Meals: B*

We fly on Westjet to Calgary, then continue to Victoria. A transfer is provided to your pickup point.

Tour Notes:

Currency & Expenses: The currency in Costa Rica is the colon; \$1 CND = 434 colons as of March 2018. US dollars are widely accepted and exchanged. Gratuities have been included for all group meals (not for included meals where you eat on your own such as at the all-inclusive resort), and for local guides, naturalists and driver-guides. As this tour has been planned and priced 10 months before departure, it is possible that exchange fluctuations could affect the fare, in which case you will be notified of the increase or decrease. All meals except one lunch are included in Costa Rica. At the all-inclusive resort, your drinks (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) are included.

Departure Tax: Costa Rica charges a departure tax of US\$29 per person which must be paid individually at the Liberia airport.

Flight: Current flight schedule is with Westjet from Victoria to San Jose, Costa Rica, with a hotel overnight in Toronto. Return is from Liberia via Calgary to Victoria, all on the same day. Costa Rica is two hours ahead of British Columbia in winter.

Documentation: A passport is required, valid for one month after return date. A visa is not required.

Triples are not available on this tour.

Accommodation: Even though Costa Rica has a busy tourism industry, it is still a 3rd World country and accommodation outside the cities is usually not up to the standards of Canadian and American hotels. We generally select the best available lodging in each location, but please do not expect to stay in 4- and 5-star hotels.

Beverages: In many countries outside Canada and USA, it is not standard practice to include beverages with tour meals. On this tour, a soft drink or bottled water is included with each meal and other beverages can be purchased. Almost all beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic, are included at the Barcelo all-inclusive resort.



Activity: Due to the historic nature of some attractions and the nature walks looking for birds and animals, it will be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces, and walk at least a kilometre, plus stand for an extended time on walking tours. This tour is not appropriate for people who require the use of a walker. There can be long walks in the airports and you are urged to request a cart or wheelchair at check-in if this could be a concern. The coaches and vessels cannot carry a scooter. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the coach by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. If you are not able to participate in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, drivers and local guides have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be asked to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$800 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due October 10, 2018. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$300 discount on first 8 seats and \$150 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after October 10.

Cancellation Policy: Up to August 10, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From August 11 to September 10, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From September 11 to October 10, the cancellation charge is \$800 per person (your deposit). From October 11 to November 9, the cancellation charge is 60% of the tour fare. After November 9, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to currency exchange rates or taxes and surcharges from airlines and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups and dropoffs may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and the size of the chartered vehicle. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

Tour 25: This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning the tour is limited to 25 participants, a more intimate travel experience.

Photo Credit: Barcelo Occidental Hotel

E-points: This tour earns 133 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until October 10.

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