

MULTISPORT ITINERARY
PREMIERE INN TRIP

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

Costa Rica

BIKE, HIKE & RAFT FROM RAIN FORESTS TO PACIFIC BEACHES

TO RESERVE YOUR
TRIP CALL
800-462-2848 OR
SIGN UP ONLINE [HERE](#)



Important Facts
at a glance

6 DAYS, 5 NIGHTS

Click [here](#) for departure dates
and pricing details

ROUTE RATING

Levels 1–2

See [below](#) for details.

Ready to treat your family to an intimate encounter with Mother Nature? Come play with us in Costa Rica! Beloved for its parks, biological reserves and wildlife refuges, this friendly Central American nation protects a larger proportion of land than any country in the world. On this action-packed multisport journey on Costa Rica's lightly trafficked Pacific coast, you'll experience precious ecosystems firsthand. Bask on untouched beaches, venture through lush jungles, see wildlife at every turn and enjoy a rich array of activities, from surfing and sea kayaking to horseback riding and zip-line "flying." You'll spend four nights right on the ocean, highlighted by two evenings at an enchanting and luxurious boutique hotel.

DAY 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders at 9 a.m. at the Costa Rica Marriott Hotel (700 Metros Oeste de la Firestone), located several miles outside the city of San José and about 10 minutes from the international airport. *Please arrive dressed in your warm-weather biking clothes with rain gear handy and bring a small bag or daypack with clothing and gear for today's ride. See "Luggage Restrictions" for more details.*

SHUTTLE TO PAVAS AIRPORT & FLIGHT TO PALMAR SUR 1 HOUR, 15 MINUTES

SOUTHERN PACIFIC WARM-UP RIDE 16 MILES (656-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

KIDS OPTION: TILAPIA FARM 7 MILES (200-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

Bienvenidos! After meeting, we drive to the Pavas municipal airport and hop on a 45-minute flight westward, soaring over the fertile central valley and the Talamanca Mountain Range to Palmar Sur, access point to the southern Pacific coast. After we land, your Backroads Trip Leaders fit your bike and give a brief demonstration of biking techniques and safety. Pedal north on paved and hard-packed gravel roads. As you travel through open pastures and rain forest, take in the ocean and mountain views around you and keep your eyes and ears open for colorful toucans and loud howler monkeys! Upon arriving at Tilapia Farm, we savor our first meal together and have the chance to take a refreshing dip at the picturesque local waterfall.

This afternoon kids can go fishing with a leader while you return to your bike and follow a rolling route to Hotel Cristal Ballena, our home for the first two nights. The resort sits on the coast and overlooks the Pacific on one side and jungle-covered hills on the other. Settle in, relax by the pool or simply absorb the views from your room. We gather tonight for a welcome reception followed by a delicious dinner. *Lodging: Hotel Cristal Ballena*

IN BUSINESS FOR
29 YEARS,
BACKROADS IS
RECOGNIZED YEAR IN
AND YEAR OUT AS
ONE OF THE WORLD'S
TOP 10 TRAVEL
COMPANIES BY
TRAVEL+LEISURE



Our Accommodations
Premiere Inns

HOTEL RESORT CRISTAL BALLENA

(2 nights) Savor breathtaking ocean vistas from your room at this stylish retreat, nestled between the Pacific and rain forest-covered hills and featuring a huge swimming pool and a 30-acre garden.

Dominical

phone: 506-786-5354

www.cristal-ballena.com

RAFIKI SAFARI LODGE

(1 night) This unique jungle resort offers unbeatable wildlife viewing from the private hardwood decks of its roomy safari tents.

Savegre

phone: 506-777-2250

www.rafikisafari.com

XANDARI BY THE PACIFIC

(2 nights) The spacious private villas at this beachside resort feature a large terrace with unencumbered views of the Pacific Ocean and a mosaic-tiled shower that opens to a private garden.

Playa Esterillos Este

phone: 506-778-7070

www.xandari.com

**EACH YEAR,
3 OUT OF 4 OF OUR
GUESTS HAVE
PREVIOUSLY
TRAVELED WITH US OR
BEEN REFERRED BY
SOMEONE WHO HAS**

DAY 2

HACIENDA BARU HIKE 3.1 MILES (150-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

FREE TIME AT HACIENDA BARU/DOMINICAL

Today begins with a hike through the Hacienda Barú National Wildlife Refuge with a local naturalist. At the beginning of the 20th century, Hacienda Barú was all virgin jungle. Destruction of vast sections of rain forest began with the first wave of settlers, who cleared land for cattle and crops. Jack Ewing bought Hacienda Barú in the early '70s and began restoring its habitat, phasing out ranching and farming, and creating natural corridors where wildlife could migrate. Follow our route through the refuge's many habitats: primary forest, secondary forest in various stages of restoration, swamp forest, wetlands, mangroves, beach, river mouth, tree plantations and open pasture. Keep an eye out for white-faced monkeys, three-toed sloths, toucans and the elusive river otter.

After a picnic lunch at the hacienda, choose from a variety of activities, including a unique zip-line canopy tour. A series of ingeniously constructed platforms connected by taut steel cables high in the treetops enables you to experience an entirely different perspective on the flora and fauna. Accompanied by trained guides, clip onto a cable with pulley and harness devices and "fly" over the treetops from platform to platform. If the zip-line is not for you, explore other hiking trails at Hacienda Barú or return to the hotel where more choices await: get a massage, try sea kayaking, take a mangrove tour or go horseback riding to a beautiful waterfall. (Note: the zip-line and most other optional activities are not included in the trip price.)

Tonight, while you dine at The Lookout, a nearby resort with an award-winning chef, the younger set heads poolside with the Backroads Leaders for a special kid-friendly meal at our hotel. *Lodging: Hotel Resort Cristal Ballena*

DAY 3

DOMINICAL ROUTE 17 MILES (250-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

KIDS OPTION: 12 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (150-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHUTTLE TO SANTO DOMINGO 1½ HOURS

RAFIKI HIKE 2.1 MILES (492 FOOT-ELEVATION GAIN)

KIDS' RAIN FOREST FRISBEE GOLF 1 HOUR

The ride from Cristal Ballena along the Costanera Highway toward Dominical highlights incredible ocean and rain forest views. There are also some rolling hills along the way (the short option avoids most of them). The *pozo azul* (blue well), with its quiet waterfall and swimming hole, is a great place to cool off en route.

After shuttling north, we're welcomed into a Santo Domingo home for a midday meal of traditional Costa Rican foods and a unique opportunity to see how a family lives in a rural village. Explore the community with a local who'll then lead you along rough roads—with stunning views of the Savegre River Valley—to the Rafiki Safari Lodge. Run by a South African family, this jungle resort includes spacious safari tents atop hardwood decks, each with its own tiled bathroom. This afternoon the kids release pent-up energy playing a leader-led round of rain forest Frisbee golf or enjoying multiple runs on Costa Rica's fastest waterslide at the hotel pool. Relax this evening on your private deck with lovely vistas of the pristine river valley and listen for the jaguar-like call of howler monkeys before gathering for a family-style feast in the lodge's open-air dining room. *Lodging: Rafiki Safari Lodge*



Top Reasons Why
you should take this trip

We provide a variety of route options so you can do as much or as little activity as you like each day.

You'll stay in the area's finest hotels, each carefully selected based on our rigorous quality standards.

You'll enjoy the best of the region's cuisine, as well as Backroads' trademark grand picnics.

Our Trip Leaders have undergone hundreds of hours of training and are the best in the industry.

DAY 4

WHITE-WATER RAFTING 2½ HOURS

MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK GUIDED WALK 2 MILES (NO ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTION: MIRADOR 3.5 MILES (300-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHUTTLE TO PLAYA ESTERILLOS ESTE 45 MINUTES

Step outside the hotel this morning and join experienced local guides for an exhilarating white-water rafting excursion on the Savegre River, which drops steeply from the mountains above Quepos. Class II-III rapids pass through a series of pools and dense jungle before a gentle finish amid quiet farmland near sea level (minimum age for rafting is 8).

Back on dry land, we refuel with lunch before shuttling 20 minutes to Manuel Antonio National Park, where our longtime friends and naturalists from Ave-Natura join us. Named for a Spaniard who died during a skirmish with the Quepoa tribe in the 1500s, Manuel Antonio National Park was established in 1972. It's now home to more than 100 mammal species and 180 bird species, and is one of Costa Rica's most beloved parks. Our guides lead the way past black cedar, monkey comb and balsa trees festooned with epiphytes and bromeliads. Brilliant purple and orange land crabs scurry into sandy holes as we approach, and agoutis rustle through the underbrush. Iguanas slither up tree trunks, while *carablanca*s, or white-faced monkeys, make a noisy and messy (look out below!) meal of wild plantains in the branches above us. Also overhead, you're likely to observe green kingfishers, golden masked tanagers and Baird's trogons.

Our last two nights are spent at Xandari by the Pacific, a beachfront resort with spacious private villas. Eat dinner tonight at your leisure in its open-air thatched-roof restaurant. The menu features international and Costa Rican dishes with an emphasis on fresh seafood and produce, with many fruits, vegetables and herbs grown in the hotel's gardens.
Lodging: Xandari by the Pacific

DAY 5

KIDS SURF LESSONS 2 HOURS

SHUTTLE TO RAINMAKER 1 HOUR ROUND-TRIP

RAINMAKER WALK 1.6 MILES (250-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

FREE TIME AT PLAYA ESTERILLOS ESTE

Kids spend the morning with a Backroads Leader at the beach and in the waves, taking surfing lessons from local instructors. (The minimum age for surf lessons is 7.)

Meanwhile, you can visit the nearby Rainmaker Conservation Project. Consisting of 90 percent virgin rain forest, Rainmaker is a private reserve spanning more than 1,500 acres and is home to more than 70 percent of the flora and fauna species found in Costa Rica. Walk along the winding Río Seco, catching glimpses of the habitats of poison dart frogs, huge millipedes, tent-making bats, basilisk lizards (also called Jesus Christ lizards for their ability to "walk" on water), blue morpho butterflies and dozens of tropical birds. Along portions of the route, an elevated canopy system of hanging bridges provides unobstructed views from the treetops.

After lunch at Xandari, do as you please the rest of the afternoon. Soothe sore muscles in the Jacuzzi or with an in-room massage, go horseback riding, lounge with a book by the hotel pool or head to the beach for a stroll, shell collecting or sand-castle building. (Massages and horseback riding are not included in the trip price.) *Lodging: Xandari by the Pacific*

**WHEN YOU SIGN UP
FOR A TRIP, YOU'LL
RECEIVE A
COMPREHENSIVE
TRAVEL PLANNER
WITH ALL THE
INFORMATION YOU
NEED TO PLAN
AND PREPARE**



Backroads' route rating system is the most comprehensive and accurate in the travel industry. To find out how these ratings translate into varying levels of physical challenge and activity, please visit our Web site

—www.backroads.com—

and select the route rating button for the trip of your choice.

LEVEL 1

10–20 miles/day (biking)

2–5 miles/day (walking)

2–3 hours/day

LEVEL 2

21–30 miles/day (biking)

5–7 miles/day (walking)

2–4 hours/day

**ASK FOR REFERENCES
FROM PAST GUESTS
WHO HAVE TAKEN THE
TRIP THAT INTERESTS
YOU**

DAY 6

FLIGHT TO SAN JOSE 20 MINUTES

After another satisfying Xandari breakfast and a few more deep breaths of ocean air, we shuttle 20 minutes to the local airstrip, where we board a small charter plane for San José. See “Arriving & Departing” for end-of-trip logistics.

ARRIVING & DEPARTING

Please note that meeting and departing times provided here were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change. **PLEASE DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON YOUR VACATION AND HAVE VERIFIED THE DETAILS OF ARRIVING & DEPARTING WITH YOUR TRIP CONSULTANT.**

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders at 9 a.m. at the Costa Rica Marriott Hotel (700 Metros Oeste de la Firestone), located several miles outside the city of San José and about 10 minutes from the international airport. See “Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip” for more information on this hotel. Please arrive in your warm-weather biking clothes with rain gear handy.

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last morning of the trip, we board a small charter plane in Playa Esterillos and arrive at the San José international airport at approximately 11 a.m. **Delays due to weather are possible.** If you plan to fly out of San José that day, please do not schedule your flight until later in the afternoon. (Factor in enough time for security checks and possible delays.)

Note that you will be required to pay an **airport exit tax of approximately \$26** when you leave Costa Rica. The tax is payable in U.S. dollars, or the equivalent in Costa Rican colones, or with your Visa card (but not MasterCard).

If you are extending your vacation in Costa Rica (or taking a later flight from San José international airport), Backroads offers a complimentary shuttle to the Marriott Hotel & Resort, arriving at approximately noon.

If you decide to extend your stay at Xandari by the Pacific, Backroads will gladly reimburse your internal air fee for the charter flight on Day 6; however, you must let us know your plans at least 35 days before your trip. **Backroads does not waive the internal air fee for changes made to travel plans within 35 days of the trip start.** To get back to San José, we recommend taking a regularly scheduled NatureAir (www.natureair.com) flight from Quepos to San José. Hotel transfer to Quepos Airport costs about \$35 for one to five people and drive time is about 25 minutes. The flight to San José takes about 20 minutes and tickets costs around \$55. Remember that your luggage will need to fly back with you to San José. **Contact NatureAir for domestic luggage weight limits.** Also keep in mind that NatureAir only flies to the Pavas municipal airport in San José, situated 30 minutes away from the international airport. To catch your flight home, you will need to take a taxi to the international airport. Please plan your international flight departure accordingly.

Alternatively, you can travel from Quepos to San José via ground transfer with Velero del Rey—about 2½ hours by car—for around \$150.



Note

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS

Because space on our two private charter flights is extremely limited, the Backroads van will transport your luggage by land to our first night's hotel as well as from our last night's hotel back to San José, where it will be safely stored and waiting for you at the conclusion of the trip. Please arrive at the trip start with a daypack or overnight bag packed with your clothing and gear for today's ride (don't forget raingear!). This bag should also include money, your passport, sun protection, a hat and insect repellent. Keep this daypack separate from your other luggage, and please be sure that all luggage is packed and ready to go when we meet at the Marriott. The daypack will accompany you on the flight.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

Several airlines, including American, Continental, United and LACSA, fly to San José's international airport (airport code: SJO). For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent, please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE

Taxi service from the airport to downtown San José costs about \$15. You can pay in U.S. dollars or exchange money at the airport. The ride takes 30-40 minutes. Buses to San José leave the airport several times an hour and cost about \$1—payable in colones only—per person. Baggage is allowed on the buses and the ride takes 40-60 minutes.

At the airport, the official taxis are orange; around the city, official taxis are red with a small yellow triangle on the side that shows their registration tag number. Meters are calibrated to official rates for local trips; for longer distances, ask for a quote before getting into the taxi.

WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents charge a fee for their consulting services.) Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels that we visit on this trip; see the sidebar above for details.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide in the sidebar for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the chart reflects the Internet and/or Best Available rates, which were accurate at the time of printing, but hotel rates are always subject to change.

Hotel Room Rate Guide	
(U.S. dollars per night)	
Up to \$100	◆
\$101-200	◆◆
\$201-300	◆◆◆
\$301-500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

SAN JOSE

COSTA RICA MARRIOTT HOTEL & RESORT (OUR MEETING LOCATION ON DAY 1)

Set on a 30-acre coffee plantation and surrounded by breathtaking views of the Central Valley Mountains, this tasteful hacienda-like mansion is about 10 minutes from the international airport. Not only recognized for its dramatic setting and attractive décor, it's also known for its numerous facilities including two outdoor pools, a golf driving range, a fitness center, the Palmas Wellness & Spa, and a variety of appealing dining options. 700 Metros Oeste de la Firestone, San Antonio de Belén; Phone: 800-228-9290 or 506-298-0000; www.marriott.com; 238 rooms and 6 suites. Rates: ◆◆

ORGANIZE A BACKROADS PRIVATE TRIP FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES FOR THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

FINCA ROSA BLANCA COUNTRY INN

Overlooking the lush Central Valley with its coffee plantations, dense forests and towering volcanoes, Finca Rosa Blanca sits on 10 acres blanketed with exotic vegetation. The creative talents of owners Glenn and Teri Jampol are reflected in the whimsical hand-painted murals, bright colorful fabrics and eclectic art collection. For a special treat, indulge in a late afternoon poolside nap amid *biguerón* trees and vibrant tropical flora, followed by a memorable gourmet dinner prepared in the main house. Santa Bárbara de Heredia; Phone: 506-269-9392; www.finca-rblanca.co.cr; 3 rooms and 6 suites. Rates: ♦♦♦

XANDARI RESORT & SPA

Xandari is situated on the outskirts of the city, only 20 minutes from San José's international airport. The lush tropical landscape surrounding the 40-acre coffee and fruit plantation ensures that each of the 22 villas dotting the property is shrouded in privacy. Villas share two 60-foot-long heated lap pools, a Jacuzzi and a full-service spa, and guests are encouraged to explore the plantation's scenic trails, which lead to dramatic waterfalls. Xandari's healthful and flavorful cuisine, accentuated by the plantation's own fresh-grown produce, has earned praise from travel and gourmet connoisseurs alike, including *Condé Nast Traveler*. Apdo. 1485-4050, Alajuela; Phone: 866-363-3212 or 506-443-2020; www.xandari.com; 22 villas. Rates: ♦♦♦

HAMPTON INN & SUITES SAN JOSE AIRPORT

Located just a few minutes from the international airport, the Hampton Inn (part of the Hilton hotel chain) offers travelers a choice of comfortable guest rooms or spacious suites. Amenities include a fitness center and a swimming pool. 1100 Airport Boulevard; Phone: 800-426-7866 or 506-436-0000; www.hamptoninn.hilton.com; 100 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

HOTEL GRANO DE ORO

A little-known hideaway, this former Victorian home turned enchanting hotel is accented by tropical flora, courtyards filled with Italian-tiled fountains and a private rooftop terrace featuring Jacuzzis and gardens. Each guest room is embellished with fine damask fabrics, Costa Rican crafts and crisp blue and white tile work. Reputed to be one of the city's finest restaurants, Restaurante Grano de Oro features a blend of tropical and European cuisines inspired by talented chef Francis Canal. Calle 30 between Avenidas 2 and 4; Phone: 506-255-3322; www.hotelgranodeoro.com; 35 rooms and 3 suites. Rates: ♦♦

We hope you've found this information useful, but nothing substitutes for speaking with one of our experienced Trip Consultants. Please call 800-462-2848 Monday-Sunday, between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific time.

Hotel Room Rate Guide (U.S. dollars per night)

Up to \$100	♦
\$101–200	♦♦
\$201–300	♦♦♦
\$301–500	♦♦♦♦
\$501 and up	♦♦♦♦♦