



essential
**COSTA
RICA**

Media Contacts:
Ines Cano / Monica Kelly
Cheryl Andrews Marketing Communications
P: 305-444-4033

ines@cam-pr.com / monica@cam-pr.com

COSTA RICA'S MOST VISITED NATIONAL PARKS

The Central American nation remains committed to preserving the country's natural treasures

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica – Feb. 26, 2016 – From protected rainforests to active volcanoes and cascading waterfalls, Costa Rica has quickly become a leading destination for outdoor enthusiasts who want to reconnect with nature and awaken their spirit of adventure. Holding 5 percent of the world's known biodiversity, the country has held a longtime commitment to preservation with 26 percent of its land mass under national protection. Though home to an impressive 28 national parks and 8 biological reserves, those looking to travel to the Central American nation can begin by exploring one of the five most visited national parks in the country:



Manuel Antonio National Park (Annual Visitors: 360,176)

Located in the country's Pacific Coast, Manuel Antonio National Park lures travelers to its beautiful beaches and tropical shoreline. The area is characterized by dense vegetation, which spills onto the beaches' clean sand, offering a rejuvenating swim for visitors. With annual temperatures ranging in the 70s, the beaches of Manuel Antonio make for a pleasant stop year round. Another major attraction at Manuel Antonio is its rainforest, home to several unique species of flora and fauna. In fact, Manuel Antonio is

the perfect place to encounter white-faced and squirrel monkeys, as well as a variety of birds and sloths. Iguanas, pelicans, frogs, butterflies and crabs are just a few more creatures that can be appreciated during a visit to its hiking trails.

Because of the delicate biodiversity that inhabits Manuel Antonio, several measures and guidelines are strictly enforced to help protect and preserve the area including the prohibition of shore and sports fishing and turtle watching at El Rey beach, among others.



Poás Volcano National Park (Annual Visitors: 339,542)

Located 30 minutes from San Jose in the Alajuela province, Poás (rising up to 8,885 feet) is one of the country's largest and most active volcanoes providing visitors with jaw-dropping views. The volcano contains one of the most acidic lakes on Earth, Laguna Caliente, which often changes color in a matter of hours, ranging from emerald to grey-white. One of the volcano's dormant craters has transformed into the cool-water, jade-colored Laguna

Botos, which is surrounded by a breathtaking cloud forest.

The park's protected wildlife area ranges from 4,000 to 8,860 feet above sea level, at its highest point. Its 16,000 acres protect several species of flora and fauna, as well as an important water resource. Travelers visiting Poás can enjoy sightings of 79 species of birds that have been identified inside the protected zone including the quetzal, emerald toucanet, black guan, sparrow, hummingbird and robin. Few large mammals are found inside the park, however, smaller, less conspicuous critters such as marmots, coyotes, rabbits, squirrels, snakes, frogs and a plethora of insects are present.

Also found at the park are unique plant species like "Sombrilla del pobre" which translates to "the poor man's umbrella." The plant, which only grows in humid climates like that of the Poás National Park, has leaves that grow in a circle with a diameter of up to six feet. It is the perfect place to get some quick shade or take a selfie surrounded by nature.

Irazú Volcano National Park (Annual Visitors: 139,862)

Just a short 1.5 hour drive from San Jose in the Cartago province is the Irazú Volcano, the country's highest volcano, standing 11,260 feet high, located within Irazú National Park. The volcano has several craters, two of which are the principal attractions. The larger of the two delves 900 feet deep, as steam rises up into the air giving visitors at nearby viewing stations an amazing sight to behold. The smaller crater, Diego de la Haya, which dips below the surface 300 feet.

The landscape of Irazú Volcano National Park flourishes on 5,705 acres of immaculate mountain forest, mainly comprised of primary, secondary and cloud forest. At the summit, travelers can enjoy amazing views of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans on a clear day. Although wildlife is often difficult to see because of the constant volcanic activity, many small animals make their home within the park's perimeters including coyotes, squirrels, rabbits, owls and woodpeckers.

Marino Ballena National Park (Annual Visitors: 143,861)

Named after the humpback whales that migrate to the park in mid-July and October, and again in December through March, the Marino Ballena National Park is located in the South Pacific coast at the footsteps of the community of Uvita – Bahia Ballena, in the province of Puntarenas, Osa, Costa Rica. Established in 1990, Marino Ballena's is one of the country's newest national parks and is committed to the conservation of the rich marine ecosystems found within its boundaries. In fact, the park contains some of the largest coral formations on the Pacific side of Central America.



One of the park's biggest attractions is "El paso de Moises" translated to the "Passage of Moses" in English. This phenomenon happens at low-tide when the water gets so low it creates a passageway like the one from the Biblical story. For years, scientists and visitors alike have been captivated by this unique sight.

At the north end of the park is Uvita, a small community with gorgeous beaches and incredibly clear-blue water. Playa Uvita is a good place for horseback riding, swimming or just walking on its sandy beach. The beach is located in the protected area of the park and fishing of the marine life is strictly prohibited. Snorkeling and scuba diving are favorite activities as are visits to the mangroves where green marine iguanas, olive ridley and hawksbill turtles gather.



Tortuguero National Park (Annual Visitors: 57,658)

Tortuguero (turtle catcher) National Park is located in the Limon province of Costa Rica. Created to protect the endangered baula, carey, cahuama, green and lora turtles that spawn on the country's Caribbean Coast from July to October, the park is one of Costa Rica's most important conservation sites. It houses and protects 46,815 acres of natural wildlife habitat including over 20 miles of coastline in which turtles lay eggs. It houses 13 of the country's 16 endangered species including jaguars, tapirs and

monkeys, which rely on the park's protected status for survival. Visitors can also spot over 300 species of birds, reptiles and other mammals. Today, four different species of sea turtles nest here: the green turtle, the hawksbill, the loggerhead and the giant leatherback.

The area's high rainfall and rich environment where freshwater meets the sea makes the beaches, canals, lagoons and wetlands of the park one of the most biodiverse regions in Costa Rica, and a truly memorable experience for nature lovers.

For more information on Costa Rica or its national parks, please visit www.VisitCostaRica.com.

About Costa Rica

Costa Rica is located in Central America, nestled between Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south; it is bordered on the east by the Caribbean Sea and the west by the Pacific Ocean. With an abundance of unique wildlife, landscapes and climates this small country proudly shelters approximately five percent of the known biodiversity in the world. In order to protect and preserve its wealth of natural resources Costa Rica has become a global leader in sustainable practices with protected areas comprising 26 percent of its land mass. With a peaceful spirit, emphasis on education and an economy based on tourism, technology and exportation, Costa Ricans and visitors alike enjoy one of the highest standards of living and organized tourism infrastructure in Latin America among a tropical paradise of lush rainforests, mystical volcanoes and cloud forests and beaches that meet mountains filled with monkeys and macaws. Offering a broad terrain of activities and accommodations, visitors to Costa Rica will find a range of hotel options ranging from small beachside bed & breakfasts, to authentic intimate boutique mountain lodges, to major international business hotel brands and everything in between; Costa Rica's accommodations offer something appealing for everyone's desires. The phrase "Pura Vida" can be heard echoing throughout Costa Rica from coast to coast. Used as a greeting or expression of happiness, the phrase literally translates to "pure life," however its true meaning is "full of life," which accurately describes the adventure and wonder that await visitors.

About Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (ICT)

Established in 1955, the Costa Rica Tourism Board spearheads the vital task of regulating and promoting Costa Rica's extensive of tourism offerings. The ICT and its partners in the private sector work tirelessly to garner recognition, standardize practices, provide insightful research data and foster cultural development for the country's coast to coast one-of a kind tourism products and resources.

#