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**COSTA
RICA**

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WET AND WILD IN COSTA RICA: ADVENTURE EXPERTS ZERO IN ON COUNTRY'S TOP WATER SPORTS FOR THRILL SEEKERS

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica – September 28, 2015 – With more than 900 miles of coastline along the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, Costa Rica is a fitting playground for those seeking an adrenaline rush on the water. From pristine beaches to flowing rivers and peaceful lakes – and a pleasant year-round weather to match – the Central American nation has quickly become a leading destination for water sports adventures.

Some of the country's renowned industry experts share their top water sports activities, below, for those looking to get wet.

Surfing

Costa Rica has quickly become an international surfing destination for its easy access to hundreds of beaches and ideal surfing conditions year round. The country offers four different zones that are ideal for surfing: the Caribbean, Northern, Southern and Central Pacific coasts – all with waves of varying intensity for novice to experienced surfers.

According to Randall Chaves, president of the Costa Rican Surfing Federation (FSC), some stand out spots include:

- Pavones Beach in the Southern Pacific – has one of the best waves in the world, spanning more than half a mile long
- Roca Bruja (Witch's Rock) – provides world-class surfing along its sand bottom beach break
- Salsa Brava – recommended only for advanced surfers due to its strong waves and enormous tubes
- Playa Negra (Black Beach) – has rock bottom with perfect right-hand barrels and well-defined channel for paddling out
- Hermosa Beach in the Central Pacific – known for having some of the most consistent waves in the world

Surf schools can also found all over the country for those interested in learning the sport or honing their skills.

Diving and Snorkeling

Costa Rica is home to breathtaking coral reef formations, hundreds of species of multicolored fish including manta rays and sharks, as well as underwater caves.

Andres Lopez, a marine biologist and dive expert, says that divers can explore both Pacific and Caribbean waters, but the biggest dive sites are in the Pacific.

“As marine biologists who work with sharks and manta rays, we gravitate towards areas like Cocos Island and Isla Murcielagos (Bat Island) that are without a doubt, the best places for diving with sharks and other large species in Costa Rica’s Pacific,” said Lopez.

Other popular areas for diving according to Lopez include Playas del Coco in the Guanacaste region, Catalina Islands (Flamingo, Guanacaste) and Caño Island in the South.

With turquoise blue waters and colorful coral reefs, Caño Island, is one of the best Costa Rican snorkeling and scuba diving destinations. It is home to a spectacular variety of stunning marine flora and fauna and is famous for having Costa Rica’s largest concentration of coral-building organisms along the Pacific Ocean. “Some of the underwater life that can be found while snorkeling in this area include angelfish, damselfish, butterflyfish, needlefish, as well as octopi, squid, rays and nurse sharks,” Lopez added.

Rafting

Thanks to generous rainfall in most parts of the country, Costa Rica’s rivers offer exhilarating rafting adventures throughout the year. The water sport is one of the most popular in the country, due to its numerous rivers that offer options for all ages and abilities; these can range from gliding along smooth stretches that are ideal for nature watching, to maneuvering through more technical rapids.

“Rafting can be practiced in rivers like the Pacuare, Reventazon, Sarapiqui, Toro, Penas Blancas, Cucaracho, Tenorio, Corobici, Savegre, Naranjo, General and Coto. Each one features a unique variety of fauna and flora and offers optimum rafting conditions,” said Rafael Gallo, travel adventure expert and former president of Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA).

According to Gallo, beginners eager to join in on the fun can find ideal runs on the Sarapiqui and work their way up to others that are more challenging like the Pacuare. “Beginners should look for tours that expose them to Class II rapids with a bit of Class IV rapids for the thrill factor like that found in the Pacuare, while those with more advanced skills can enjoy rapids ranging from Class II to V,” he added.

For adrenaline junkies, Gallo recommends whitewater rafting in rivers with Class II to Class V rapids, depending on the experience of the individual. “If visitors want to enjoy breathtaking scenery and play in the rapids, then they should definitely try the Pacuare. While those looking for a challenge can attempt freestyle kayaking or rodeo kayaking, an extreme sport, which can be practiced in rivers like the Sarapique, Pejibaye and Pacuare,” he added.

Regardless of skill level, the rivers of Costa Rica promise a memorable ride with eye-opening views of jungles, forests and the thousands of species that inhabit them like monkeys, toucans and sloths.

Kayaking

With the pristine Caribbean Sea to the east, the lively Pacific Ocean to the west and a collection of rivers that flow across the country, Costa Rica is also a premier kayaking course. Gallo explains that there are different types of kayaking that can be done in the country. These include sea kayaking, recreational, whitewater and rodeo kayaking.

“Sea kayaking involves long expeditions lasting up to several days and can be done in places like the Bahia Salinas region, Papagayo, Nicoya and Golfo Dulce in the Pacific, as well as Puerto Viejo and Manzanillo in the Caribbean,” said Gallo. “Recreational kayaking, which is more stable (no waves) and ideal for short distances, can be enjoyed at the Tortuguero channels, in the estuary of Damas Island or any other estuary or channel in the country. The calm waters of the estuaries are also ideal for families.”

For more information on Costa Rica, 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.

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