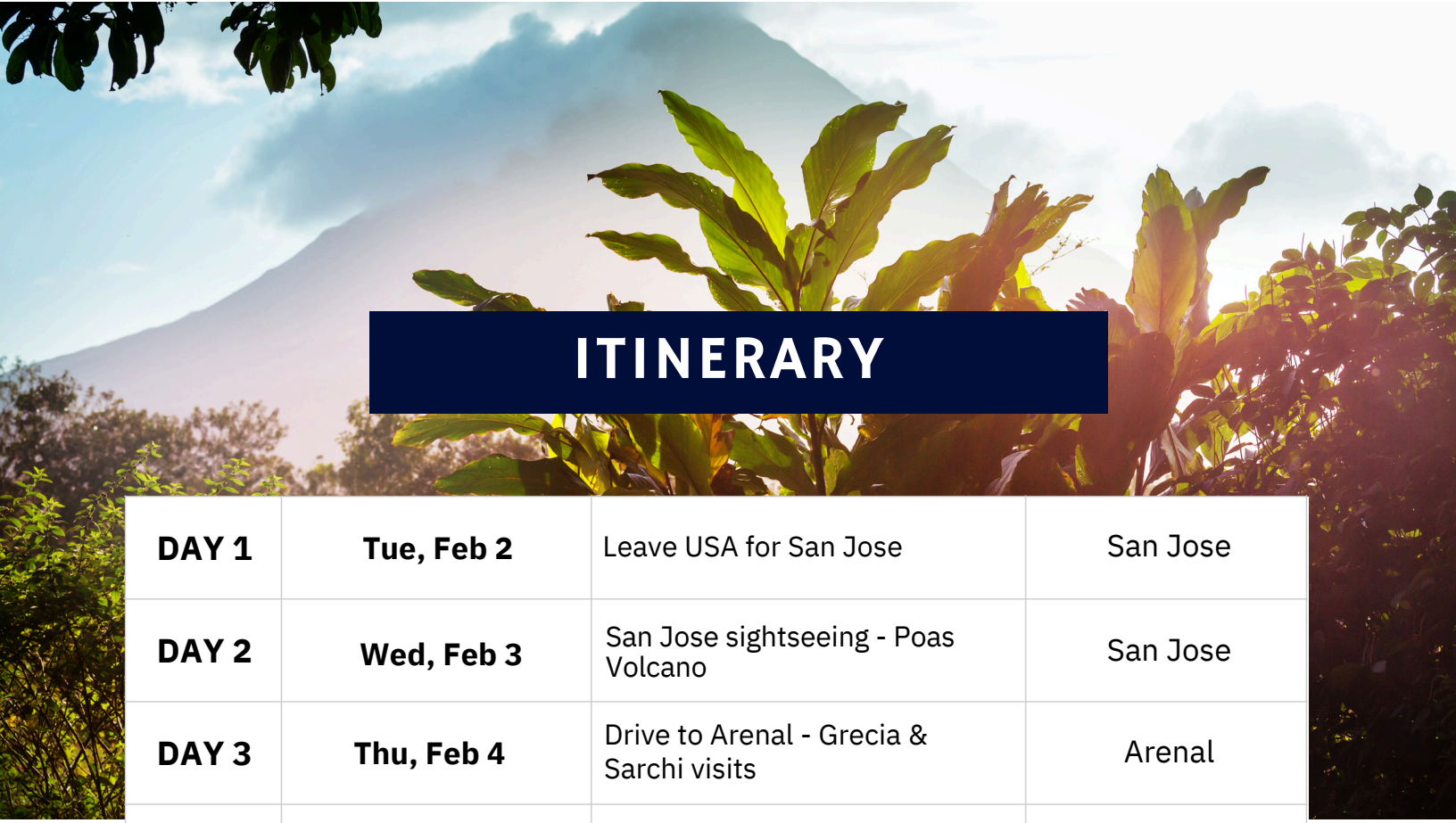
World Affairs Council of Greater Houston

Global Perspectives, *Local* Conversations

COSTA RICA



February 2-11, 2027



ITINERARY

DAY 1	**Tue, Feb 2**	Leave USA for San Jose	San Jose
DAY 2	**Wed, Feb 3**	San Jose sightseeing - Poas Volcano	San Jose
DAY 3	**Thu, Feb 4**	Drive to Arenal - Grecia & Sarchi visits	Arenal
DAY 4	**Fri, Feb 5**	River safari - Arenal National Park	Arenal
DAY 5	**Sat, Feb 6**	Drive to Monteverde - Night hike	Monteverde
DAY 6	**Sun, Feb 7**	Sky Tram & Sky Walk - Farm tour	Monteverde
DAY 7	**Mon, Feb 8**	Itinerary	Manuel Antonio
DAY 8	**Tue, Feb 9**	Itinerary	Manuel Antonio
DAY 9	**Wed, Feb 10**	Damas Island mangrove boat tour	Manuel Antonio
DAY 10	**Thu, Feb 11**	Drive to San Jose - departure	

MAP TRAJECTORY









HIGHLIGHTS

Discover **San José**, Costa Rica's capital, including the National Theater, Gold Museum, Central Market, and Metropolitan Cathedral.

Visit **Poás Volcano National Park,** known for its dramatic crater and cool mountain scenery.

Explore the artisan towns of **Grecia and Sarchí**, including the famous metal church and traditional painted oxcarts.

Experience **La Fortuna** and the iconic **Arenal Volcano** region.

Enjoy a peaceful wildlife safari on the Peñas Blancas River.

Visit **La Fortuna Waterfall**, one of the region's most beautiful natural landmarks.

Explore Monteverde's **cloud forest with a night walk and canopy-level suspension bridges.**

Learn about Costa Rica's **coffee, chocolate, and sugarcane** traditions.

Cruise the Tárcoles River in search of crocodiles, birds, iguanas, and monkeys.

Visit **Manuel Antonio National Park**, where rainforest trails meet beautiful Pacific beaches.

Discover the **Damas Mangrove ecosystem** by boat.

Enjoy leisure time on **Costa Rica's Pacific coast.**



INCLUDED

9 night's accommodation at the listed hotels, including daily breakfast.

Lunches and dinners as given in the itinerary.

Private transportation throughout the tour.

Two small bottles of water per person per day on the coach.

Services of professional licensed, English speaking tour guides.

All the sightseeing and excursions listed in the program.

Local taxes.

NOT INCLUDED

International airfare. Visa fees, if applicable.

Drinks with included meals, except drinking water for meals and tea or coffee for breakfast.

Gratuities for guides & drivers.

Personal expenditures like phone calls, laundry, medical expenses.

Travel insurance.

SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

Suggested flights are on UNITED and partner airlines:

02 Feb, UA 1096	**Houston to San Jose dep: 9:35 am / arr: 1:15pm**
11 Feb, UA 1099	**San Jose to Houston dep: 02:20 pm/ arr 6:20 pm**

Economy class: $800
Business class: $1,400

Fares are per person, including taxes, surcharges and fees as of June 29, 2026.
Fares are non-refundable and may change based on availability.

Preferred Travel Partner

UNITED

February 2-11, 2027
10 Days / 9 Nights



ACCOMMODATIONS

February 2-11, 2027
10 Days / 9 Nights

Hilton Garden Inn Sabana San Jose https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/sanjose




Lost Iguana Resort Arenal https://lostiguanacr.com/




Hotel & Spa Poco a Poco Monteverde https://www.hotelpocoapoco.com/




Shana by the Beach Manuel Antonio https://shanabythebeach.com/




PROGRAM DETAILS

Day 1: Tue, Feb 2 **USA - San Jose / Costa Rica**

We will leave in the morning for San José, the capital of Costa Rica. Upon arrival, we will be transferred to our hotel in the city.

The rest of the day will be free to relax after our flight or begin exploring San José on our own.

Set in Costa Rica's Central Valley and surrounded by volcanic mountains, San José is the country's political, cultural, and economic center. Although many travelers know Costa Rica for its rainforests, beaches, and wildlife, the capital offers an interesting first glimpse into the country's history and daily life, with lively neighborhoods, museums, cafés, markets, and historic buildings. Depending on arrival time, we may take a short walk near the hotel, enjoy a local dinner, or simply rest before the start of our Costa Rican journey.

Overnight in San Jose **Meals: D**

Day 2: Wed, Feb 3 **San José City Tour & Poás Volcano National Park**

Today we will begin with a guided tour of San José, Costa Rica's capital. This tour will introduce us to the country's culture, history, and daily life as we explore some of the city's most important museums, landmarks, and public spaces. We will start with an orientation drive through the city, including La Sabana Metropolitan Park, often considered San José's main urban park and an important gathering place for local residents.

We will then continue with a walking tour of the historic National Theater, completed in 1897 and admired for its elegant architecture, ornate interiors, and beautiful works of art. From there, we will visit one of Costa Rica's most distinctive museums, the Pre-Columbian Gold Museum, which displays an impressive collection of gold artifacts and offers insight into the region's Indigenous cultures. Our city tour will also include the lively Central Market, the Metropolitan Cathedral, and other important sites such as the University of Costa Rica, the Supreme Court, and several neighborhoods that help tell the story of modern San José.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we will leave the city for an afternoon excursion to Poás Volcano National Park. Poás is one of Costa Rica's most famous active volcanoes and is known for its vast crater, one of the largest in the world. Located in the forested mountains of the Central Volcanic Range, the park offers dramatic volcanic scenery, cool mountain air, and, weather permitting, extraordinary views into the crater. The landscape here is often shaped by mist, clouds, and light drizzle, creating a unique atmosphere as we experience one of Costa Rica's most iconic natural sites.

Overnight in San Jose **Meals: B-L-D**



Day 3: Thu, Feb 04 **Grecia, Sarchí & La Fortuna / Arenal**

This morning we will depart San José and travel toward La Fortuna, home of the majestic Arenal Volcano, one of Costa Rica's most famous natural landmarks. Although Arenal is no longer producing the dramatic lava flows for which it was once known, its perfectly shaped cone remains an impressive sight, rising above a region of lush landscapes, hot springs, rivers, farms, and Lake Arenal.

During our drive, we will pass through areas of fertile countryside, with agricultural plantations, ornamental plant nurseries, and cattle farms offering a glimpse into Costa Rica's rural life. Along the way, we will stop in the town of Grecia, often noted for its pleasant atmosphere and well-kept streets. Grecia is best known for its striking metal church, a rare example of this type of architecture in Central America and a source of great local pride. After visiting the church, we will continue to the central market area, where we can observe the rhythms of daily life and enjoy the lively local atmosphere.

Our next stop will be Sarchí, widely regarded as the cradle of Costa Rican craftsmanship. The town is especially famous for its beautifully painted traditional oxcarts, one of the country's most recognizable cultural symbols. Here, we will have the opportunity to see local artisans at work, admire their intricate designs, and browse for handmade souvenirs. If time permits, we may also see Sarchí's enormous decorated oxcart, a colorful landmark and a memorable symbol of this artisan town. We will then continue to La Fortuna, where the dramatic presence of Arenal Volcano will set the stage for the next part of our Costa Rican journey.

Overnight in Arenal **Meals: B –L- D**

Day 4: Fri, Feb 05 **Peñas Blancas River Safari & La Fortuna Waterfall**

We will begin our day with a peaceful river safari, one of the best and most enjoyable ways to experience the wildlife of the La Fortuna region. As our boat glides quietly along the Peñas Blancas River, we will be surrounded by the sights and sounds of the tropical rainforest, with excellent opportunities to observe the rich natural life of the area.

This relaxing journey takes us along a beautiful stretch of river located about 30 minutes from La Fortuna. Without the noise of a motor, we will be able to appreciate the tranquility of the rainforest and watch for tropical birds such as oropendolas, toucans, and kingfishers, as well as monkeys, poison dart frogs, caimans, and other wildlife. The slow pace of the safari will also allow time for photography and quiet observation as we float through the jungle landscape.

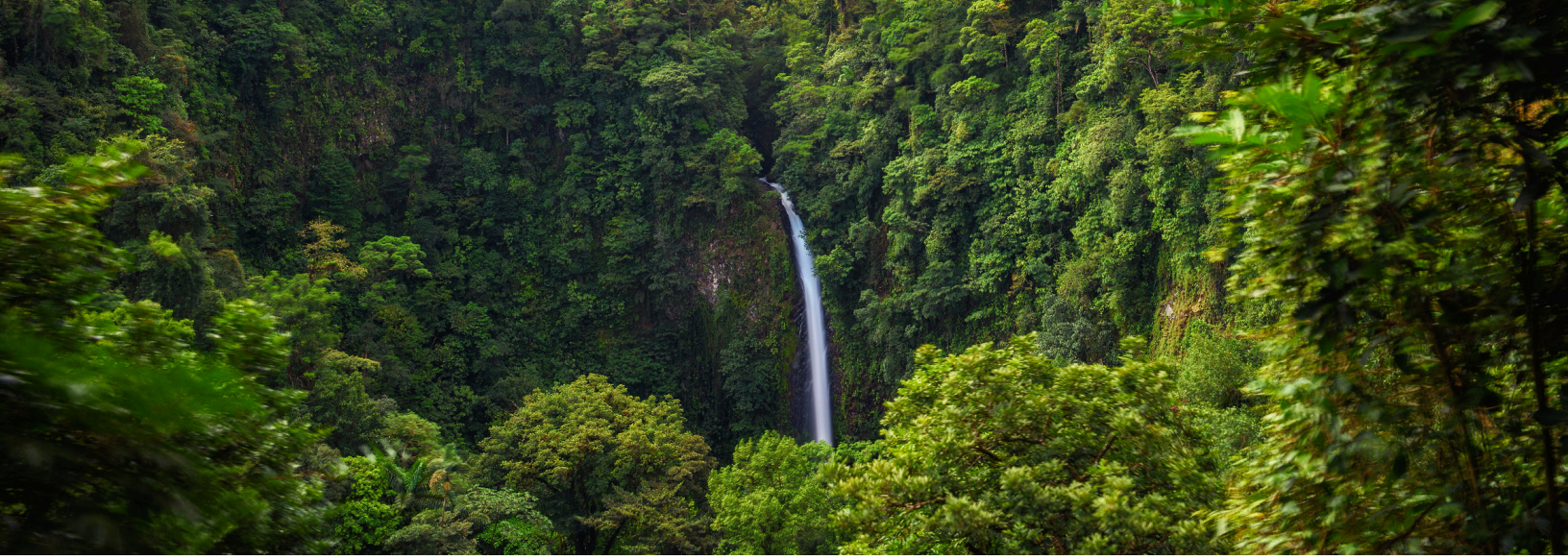
During the transfer, our guide will share information about the farms and rural communities we pass along the way, including the region's important crops such as yucca, bananas, and pineapples. We will learn how these products have contributed to Costa Rica's development and local economy. The excursion will conclude with a typical snack featuring some of these local ingredients.

After lunch, we will continue with an afternoon excursion to La Fortuna Waterfall. The waterfall is located within a biological reserve of premontane tropical rainforest and is sustainably managed by the Association for Integral Development of La Fortuna, a non-profit organization that supports the welfare and growth of the local community. Set at the base of the surrounding mountains, the waterfall drops approximately 70 meters into the clear waters of the Fortuna River, creating one of the most beautiful natural settings in the Arenal region.

To reach the waterfall, we will descend a well-maintained path of approximately 530 steps, with safety measures and resting areas along the way. At the bottom, we will have time to enjoy the spectacular view, take photographs, and, for those who wish, swim in the refreshing waters of the Fortuna River with the waterfall as a dramatic backdrop. After our visit, we will return to La Fortuna.

Overnight in Arenal **Meals: B - L – D**





Day 5: Sat, Feb 06 **Arenal to Monteverde & Cloud Forest Night Walk**

This morning we will depart the Arenal region and travel toward Monteverde, one of Costa Rica's most remarkable natural destinations. Known for its rainforests, cloud forests, and extraordinary biodiversity, Monteverde offers a very different landscape from La Fortuna and Arenal. Located along the continental divide between the Caribbean and Pacific slopes, the region's misty forests create a unique microclimate that supports an exceptional variety of plants, birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians.

During our journey, we will enjoy beautiful mountain scenery and pass through small local communities, giving us another glimpse into Costa Rican rural life and culture. Upon arrival in Monteverde, we will check into our hotel, have lunch, and enjoy some time to rest before our evening activity.

Tonight we will take part in a guided night walk in the cloud forest, one of the most memorable ways to experience Monteverde's biodiversity. As darkness falls, the forest comes alive with the sounds and movements of nocturnal wildlife. During this approximately two-hour walk, our experienced guide will help us search for mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians that are often more active at night. Since many rainforest species are nocturnal, we may have the chance to see animals such as raccoons, sloths, armadillos, olingos, kinkajous, frogs, and a variety of insects and other forest creatures.

The walk will take us through a property that combines lush forest with sustainably cultivated areas of coffee, banana, and sugarcane. This setting offers an interesting look at both Monteverde's natural environment and the community's long-standing relationship with conservation, agriculture, and sustainable land use.

Overnight in Monteverde **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 6: Sun, Feb 07 **Sky Walk & Coffee, Chocolate and Sugarcane Tour**

Today we will spend the day exploring the Monteverde region, beginning with one of its most memorable forest experiences: the Sky Walk. We will ascend toward the Continental Divide by Sky Tram, traveling approximately 800 meters above the forested landscape. From the observation station, we will enjoy sweeping views of the surrounding mountains and valleys, including the North Slope, the Gulf of Nicoya, and, weather permitting, the distant silhouettes of Arenal Volcano and Lake Arenal.

We will then continue with a high-altitude walk through the forest canopy along a series of suspension bridges. This remarkable trail includes six bridges, some reaching up to 300 meters in length, offering a privileged perspective on the cloud forest from above. As we move through the canopy, we will have the opportunity to observe Monteverde's rich variety of plants, trees, birds, insects, and other wildlife. Our specialized guide will help interpret the landscape and explain the unique ecology of this mountainous region, where mist, altitude, and tropical vegetation combine to create one of Costa Rica's most distinctive natural environments.

After lunch, we will enjoy a coffee, chocolate, and sugarcane tour. We will begin with coffee, learning about its history around the world and in Costa Rica, as well as its important role in the country's economy and development. During the visit, we will follow the coffee process from seed to cup, seeing how the beans are cultivated, harvested, processed, roasted, and finally brewed into a fresh cup of Costa Rican coffee.

The second part of the tour will focus on chocolate. We will learn about the history and cultural importance of cacao, experience its rich aromas, and take part in the process of transforming cacao from seed to drink. This hands-on experience will allow us to taste and appreciate the many stages of one of the world's most beloved products. Before concluding, we will visit a traditional sugarcane mill. Here we will learn about the origins of sugarcane, see the plantation, and observe how sugarcane is processed into different products. We will also have the opportunity to extract and taste fresh sugarcane juice, ending the afternoon with one of Costa Rica's sweetest rural traditions.

Overnight in Monteverde **Meals: B - L – D**





Day 7: Mon, Feb 08 **Tárcoles River Wildlife Safari - Manuel Antonio**

This morning we will depart Monteverde and travel toward Manuel Antonio, one of Costa Rica's most beloved coastal destinations. Manuel Antonio is home to Manuel Antonio National Park, often considered one of the country's natural jewels. Although it is Costa Rica's smallest national park, it is also among the most visited, known for its remarkable combination of tropical forest, abundant wildlife, scenic viewpoints, and beautiful Pacific beaches.

The park's trails wind through lush ecosystems where visitors may encounter monkeys, sloths, tropical birds, iguanas, and many other species in their natural habitat. Several paths lead to the area's well-known beaches, including Espadilla Sur, Manuel Antonio, Escondido, and Playita, making this region a memorable blend of rainforest and coastline. Along the way to Manuel Antonio, we will enjoy a jungle river and crocodile adventure on the Tárcoles River. This region is renowned for its rich wildlife, including scarlet macaws and American crocodiles. We will board comfortable, fully equipped boats for a safari-style excursion led by a naturalist guide, who will introduce us to the diverse ecosystems of the river, its transitional forests, and its mangrove areas.

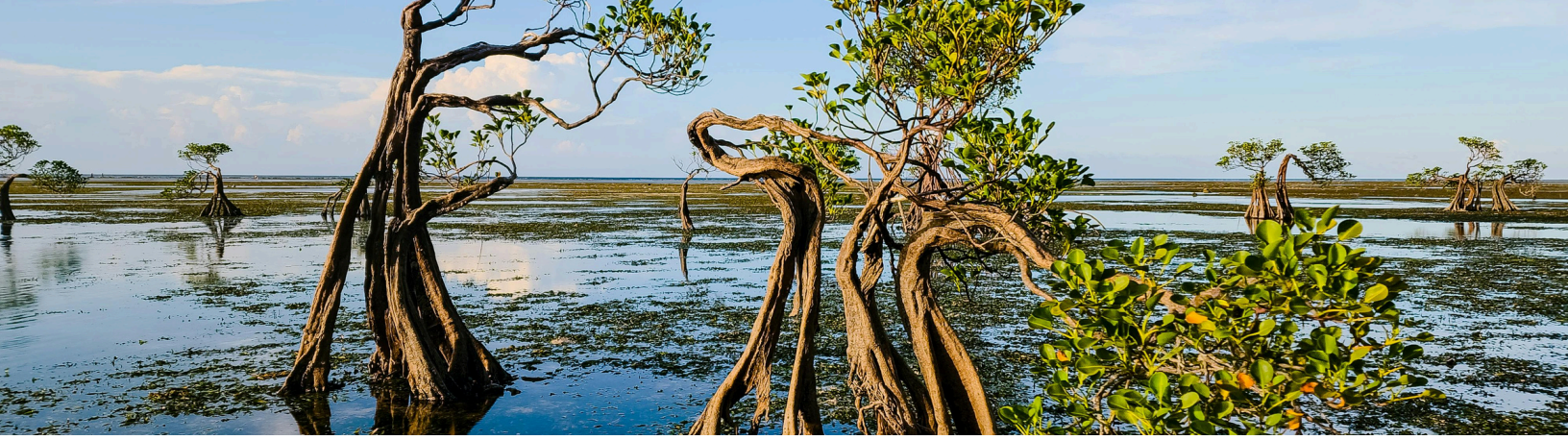
As we navigate the river, we will have excellent opportunities to observe large crocodiles, herons, iguanas, monkeys, and other wildlife that thrive in this lush environment. The Tárcoles River offers a fascinating look at Costa Rica's biodiversity and will provide an exciting natural interlude before we continue to Manuel Antonio.

Overnight in Manuel Antonio **Meals: B - L - D**

Day 8: Tue, Feb 09 **Manuel Antonio National Park**

Today we will enjoy a guided walking tour in Manuel Antonio National Park, one of Costa Rica's most celebrated protected areas. Though relatively small in size, the park is famous for its extraordinary concentration of wildlife, beautiful tropical scenery, and striking combination of rainforest, beaches, mangroves, lagoons, and offshore islands. Covering approximately 683 hectares, Manuel Antonio protects a rich variety of habitats and offers excellent opportunities for wildlife observation. As we walk along the park's trails, we may see white-faced capuchin monkeys, sloths, coatis, raccoons, iguanas, and many species of tropical birds. The park is also known as an important habitat for the endangered Central American squirrel monkey, one of the region's most distinctive and vulnerable primates. In addition to its forest trails, Manuel Antonio is known for its beautiful beaches, including Espadilla Sur, Manuel Antonio, and Puerto Escondido. The park also protects several offshore islands that serve as refuges for marine birds, as well as a lagoon, mangrove areas, and Punta Catedral, a scenic headland that connects the beaches of Manuel Antonio and Espadilla Sur. This blend of wildlife, forest, and coastline makes Manuel Antonio one of the most memorable highlights of Costa Rica.

Overnight in Manuel Antonio **Meals: B - L – D**



Day 9: Wed, Feb 10 **Damas Mangrove Boat Tour & Afternoon at Leisure**

This morning we will enjoy a boat tour through the Damas Mangrove, one of the most fascinating natural environments near Manuel Antonio. As we travel by boat through this protected estuary, we will explore a peaceful network of waterways surrounded by mangrove forest, an ecosystem that plays a vital role in Costa Rica's coastal ecology.

During the excursion, our experienced guides will introduce us to the unique structure of the mangrove environment, explaining how its trees, roots, and tidal channels create shelter and feeding grounds for many species. The unusual shapes of the mangrove roots and branches give the landscape a distinctive atmosphere, while the calm waterways offer excellent opportunities to observe wildlife.

We may encounter monkeys moving through the trees and along the riverbanks in search of food, as well as birds, reptiles, and other animals that depend on this rich estuarine habitat. This tour will offer another perspective on Costa Rica's biodiversity, showing how life thrives not only in the rainforest, but also in the country's coastal wetlands.

The afternoon will be at leisure. We may relax at the hotel, enjoy the nearby beaches, explore the town, or simply take in the relaxed atmosphere of the Manuel Antonio region.

Overnight in Manuel Antonio **Meals: B - L**

Day 10: Thu, Feb 11 **San Jose - Departure**

Early this morning we will leave Manuel Antonio and drive back through Costa Rica's beautiful countryside toward Juan Santamaría International Airport, near San José, for our afternoon departure flight.

As we make our way from the Pacific coast back to the Central Valley, we will have a final opportunity to reflect on the many landscapes and experiences of our Costa Rican journey —from volcanoes and cloud forests to rivers, mangroves, wildlife, and tropical beaches.

Meals: B



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