



2. COSTA RICA INFO

GENERAL DATA OF THE COUNTRY

Costa Rica is located in Central America, territory that is connected to North America and South America. It borders to the north with Nicaragua and Panama to the south. Due to its position, the warm weather dominates; however, many different microclimates can be found throughout the country. According to the projections of the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), Costa Rica has a population of approximately 4 890 379 people, from which 2 467 829 are men and 2 422 551 are women.

The country is divided into seven provinces (San José, the capital city; Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia, Puntarenas, Guanacaste y Limón), 81 cantons and 463 districts, in 51 100 square kilometers, which is the area of the country. It is a democratic, free and independent Republic; most of the population professes the Catholic religion and has freedom of worship. The currency is Colón and the official language is Spanish.

One of the most important and recognized features of the country is the abolition of the army, which was dissolved on December 1st, 1948 by former President José Figueres- Ferrer, when peace became one of the main qualities of Costa Rica, differentiating it from the other Central American countries with this method of defense.

Costa Rica has national patriotic symbols representing part of the identity and tradition of Costa Rica: The National Anthem of Costa Rica, the Shield of the

Republic of Costa Rica, the National Flag, the White Tail Deer, the Guaria Morada (Purple Orchid), the Marimba, the Oxcart, the Clay-colored Robin, and the Guanacaste Tree, among others.

Learn more about the [national symbols on this link](#).

Did you know?

The Crestones of Chirripó National Park are the national symbol of the natural wealth of Costa Rica.

GENERAL DATA OF THE DESTINATION

The distance between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea is 200 miles.

The variety of landscapes and microclimates that can be enjoyed in one day, make this country a paradise destination.

In our territory, travelers can find: sun and beach, adventure, nature and culture; necessary elements to satisfy the taste of thousands of tourists who find in Costa Rica their ideal vacation spot, which allows a mix of nature with the warmth of hardworking and honest people.

We Are a Sustainable and Responsible Destination

Aside from being characterized by its warmth and cultural traditions, this destination is internationally recognized for biodiversity, from which 5% of the global amount can be found here.

Costa Rica, pioneer of the concept of ecotourism, has become one of the most visited destinations in Central America, by adventure lovers, thanks to the beautiful landscapes of great natural intensity.

Mountains, valleys, volcanoes, beaches, lakes, caves, forests, national parks, springs, hot springs, and countless species of fauna and flora, are just some of the natural options available for tourists to enjoy during their visit.

26% of the national territory is protected, and given the wealth it has in wildlife, the National System of Conservation Areas protects wilderness areas and national parks in the country, with the aim of preserving natural resources; sources of life and tourism generators.

In [this link](#) can find information about [wildlife areas and national parks in Costa Rica](#):

Did you know?

In 2009, the Guayabo National Monument was declared World Heritage of Engineering according to the American Society of Civil Engineering (ASCE).

This archaeological monument is considered a milestone of global engineering, for its water supply and drainage systems as well as its roads, works that have endured over time and are still functional after more than seven centuries they have been vacated.

Wildlife Areas and National Parks

In addition, Costa Rica is a pillar of sustainable tourism, economic activity that respects the environment, causing the least possible impact and being friendly to the social and cultural environment of the country. Since 1997, the ICT implemented the Certification for Sustainable Tourism, standard recogni-

zed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as a pioneering program that has succeeded in changing the way of tourism. Every day, more hosting companies, tour operators, car rental companies and theme parks, express their explicit commitment to the sustainable management of their business, through concrete actions such as proper waste management, rational use of resources, environmental protection, respect for local culture and contribution to communities.

The model of sustainable tourism development driven by Costa Rica, which is the basis of the positioning of the country and its destination brand is built around the social and economic development and the conservation of both the natural and cultural wealth of our country.

According to the World Economic Forum, Costa Rica ranked 42 globally and sixth in Latin America on the 2015 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report.





We are a Permanent Destination

The holiday seasons in Costa Rica are not that marked from each other; however, most tourists enjoy the charms of the country in the months of November to January, Easter and the first three weeks of July. However, in the other months of the year, visitors are able to enjoy this destination at very affordable prices and always with the same quality, always predominating constant visitation from all over the world.

This is achieved through the constant attraction of international tourists through specific advertising strategies in priority markets, strengthening of cooperative campaigns, training agents, international press tours, participation in recognized international tourism fairs worldwide and different market segments, as well as adequate planning strategies for

international promotion.

Finally, with the aim of decentralize vacation seasons and promote domestic tourism, so this activity is always booming regardless of the month or season, ¡Vamos a Turistear!, the campaign to promote domestic tourism has sought to encourage the national tourist to become a potential customer of the Costa Rican tourism and with that, learn and live the experiences that can be enjoyed in Costa Rica. This is achieved with the activation of actions such as holiday discounts, instant promotions and benefits that encourage decision making to go on vacation.

We are a small, but giant destination

One of the main strengths Costa Rica has is its territorial dimension. Being a small country, but with so much natural, cultural and tourist variety, it allows tourists unique experiences without traveling hundreds of kilometers. While in the morning you can enjoy a spectacular sunrise on the beach with the heat and the sea breeze, just two hours later you can feel the sensation of flying over trees on a zip line in the most beautiful mountains in the country, enjoying ecotourism with a wide range of accommodation, transport, food and tour operators, among others, to watch a sunset with an incomparable view surrounded by warm people and tasting the best traditional dishes.

This small country is huge in human talent, quality, natural beauty, biodiversity, vocation, among other scents that distinguish and project us internationally.

We Are a Friendly Destination with Its Visitors

In 2012, Costa Rica was selected as the happiest country in the world by the Happy Planet Index and the international magazine Forbes, for its life expectancy, natural resources, the spirit of the Costa Rican, and job opportunities, among many more features than have the people of this nation.

According to polls in the country's airports, the element that most remember international tourists is precisely the warmth and friendliness of the people, who also ensure, they have caught that cheerful and positive spirit.

We Are an Unparalleled Destination

The natural and sustainable wealth is mixed with the culture of Costa Rica, which ranges from traditional delicious meals prepared with authentic products, to the most characteristic “tico” expressions, like the famous “Pura Vida”.

This combination of culture and nature in a sustainable environment is what precisely makes our destination a unique place with unique experiences; which combined, turn out to be the best vacation any visitor may live.

The network of internal roads and airports; the more than 2,400 hosting companies available, the 28 National Parks, 399 beaches and the warmth of the Costa Rican, among other elements of our country, make tourists live an wonderful trip, riddled with happiness and environmental education, in an ecological and sustainable country, whose pillar is responsible tourism.

We Are a Destination with Quality of Life

The senior citizens of the Nicoya Peninsula, north of Guanacaste, many of which exceed 90 years old, are among the longest running in the world. This was demonstrated by a study developed by demographer Luis Rosero-Bixby, from the University of Costa Rica. In 2004, he found that mortality among 90-year old Costa Ricans is 10% lower in that particular area of Guanacaste.

With an area of about 4,100 km and a population of about 132,000 people, about 5,000 inhabitants in the region now exceed 75 years, according to data from the Central American Population Center (CPC).

This attracted the attention of writer Dan Buettner, founder of Bluezones.com, who has undertaken the task of identifying the so-called “blue zones” or areas of longevity in the planet. Other blue zones on the planet are the islands of Sardinia (Italy) and Okinawa (Japan), as well as the valley of Loma Linda (California).

Aside from factors specific to the region, such as water rich in calcium, which strengthens bones, and a traditional diet, rich in fruits and hominy, with the presence of antioxidants, niacin and amino acids, there are other secrets, more focused on how people take their life.

Last but not least, living in accordance with what one is and one has, which in the end leads to happiness is an important element. This raises endorphin levels and leads to a strengthening of the immune system, certainly a unique lifestyle lived in Costa Rica that can be categorized as “Pura vida wellness”.



DATA OF TOURISM

According to the Central Bank of Costa Rica, it is estimated that by 2015, tourism grew three times as the national economy, as revenues from tourism would increase as the trend shown in recent years, a figure close to 9 % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

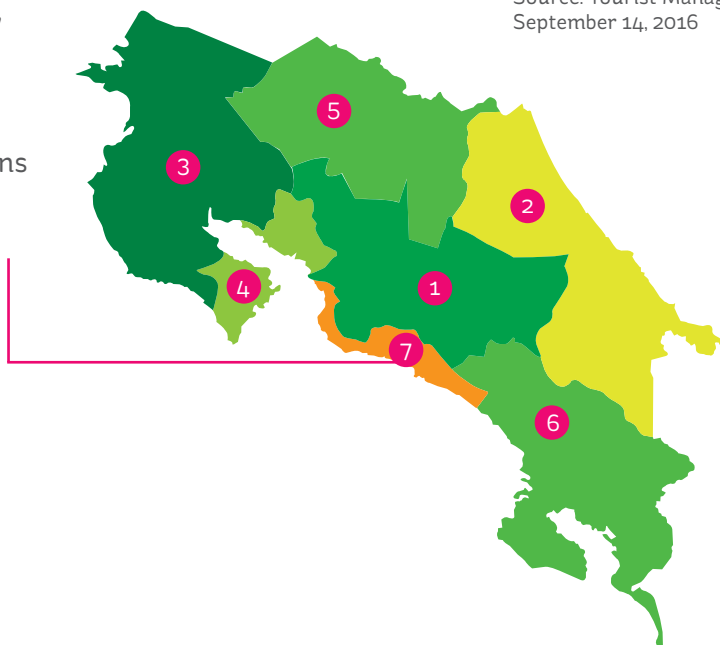
Our country is divided into seven Tourist Planning Units, i.e.; seven tourist regions. These are: Central Valley, Caribbean, Guanacaste, Puntarenas, Northern Plains, South Pacific and Mid-Pacific. Each displays a varied tourist offer including; hosting companies for all tastes and economic capacities, culinary companies seeking to satisfy all tourists, tour operators who manage to inject a dose of excitement and relaxation to national and international tourists who enjoy the attractions of Costa Rica, leasing of vehicles offering transportation according to the tastes and needs of customers, rural tourism lodges that will allow for an irreplaceable cultural experience, among many more to guarantee a holiday of leisure and business like no other.

TOURISM

9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

2015: \$2 882,4 million in foreign currency

1. Central Valley
2. Caribbean
3. Guanacaste
4. Puntarenas
5. Northern Plains
6. South Pacific
7. Mid Pacific



ICT TOURISM DECLARATION

Tourism Declaration is a voluntary certificate intended to guarantee quality of services offered.

It is a process of physical inspection in the company that verifies different requirements of each kind of company: lodging (hotels, apart hotels, condo hotels, cabins, rural tourism lodges, boutique hotels); travel agencies, restaurants, thematic activities, car rentals, maritime transport companies, congress and conventions companies, and air transport

Some of these enterprises have a particular measurement methodology. Hotels are rated by stars (from 1 to 5), restaurants are rated by forks (from 1 to 5, requiring a minimum of 5 forks to obtain the tourism declaration), night life and bars are rated by glasses (from 1 to 3), to mention some examples.

Total of companies with ICT Tourism Declaration in Costa Rica

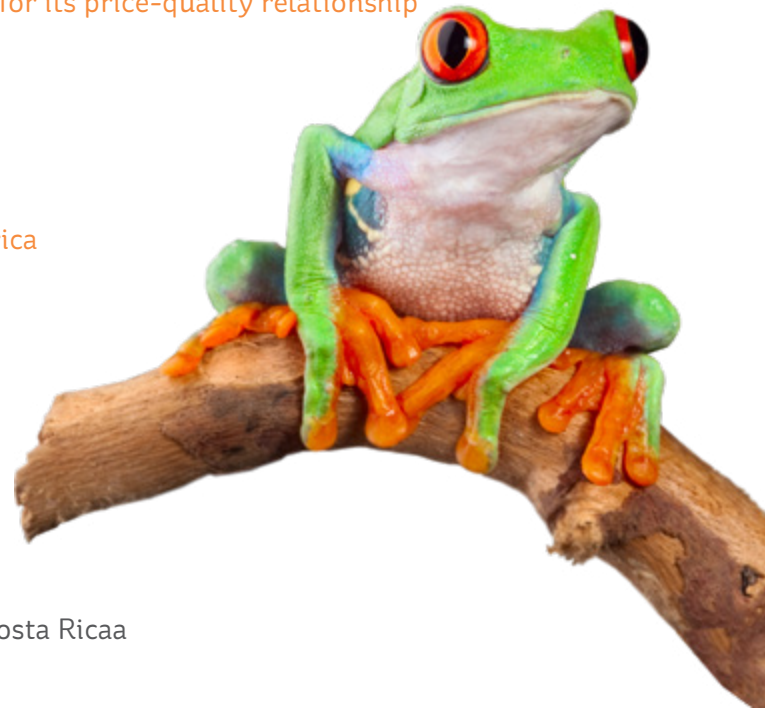
Lodging companies	457
Travel agencies	289
Gastronomic and entertainment companies	331
Thematic activities companies	30
Car rentals	37
Maritime transport companies	23
Airlines	14
Total	1 181

Source: Tourist Management and Consultancy, ICT / Cut-off date: September 14, 2016



COSTA RICAN TOP 15 AWARDS

- 1. Costa Rica: Best Stand in America and the World**
ITB Fair ITB
Berlin, Germany, March 2016
- 2. Manuel Antonio, position N° 15**
Ranking of the 25 best beaches in the world
Trip Advisor
- 3. Costa Rica, one of the top 10 destinations to travel alone**
Travesías Magazine, México
- 4. Position N°3**
Ranking of the best countries in the world
Wharton University of Pennsylvania
- 5. Costa Rica is among the list of 10 ideal destinations in the world to know by hiking**
The Telegraph, England
- 6. Caribbean Coast among the top 10 destinations to visit for its price-quality relationship**
Best value destinations for 2016
Lonely Planet
- 7. Top 10 in Birdwatching**
10 Best Tropical Destinations for Bird Watchers
Readers digest
- 8. One of the best destinations in Central and South America**
XIII edition de Reader's Choice Awards
Travel Weekly
- 9. Second Place**
16 coolest destinations to visit in 2016
National Geographic Traveller
- 10. Happiest country in the world**
Happy Index Planet 2016
New Economics Foundation.
- 11. Best Beaches in Central America**
Eight of the best 10 beaches in Central America are in Costa Ricaa
News Americas Now
- 12. Third best country to live at in Latin America**
Prosperity Index 2015
Legatum Institute
- 13. Best, sexiest and most romantic destination for a honey moon in Latin America**
19° annual edition in the Recommended Reader's Choice Awards
Recommended Magazine
- 14. Costa Rica among the safest places to travel alone**
The Huffington Post (Constitutional Estate Ranking 2015 from World Justice Project)
- 15. 10 best tours and expeditions in the world**
USA TODAY





3. ICT TOP 10

1. Tourism in Costa Rica generates **150 thousand direct jobs, 450 thousand indirect jobs; meaning that almost 6 thousand people** work in the tourist industry, 27% of the work force in the country.
2. The Certification for Sustainable Tourism is a program enforced by ICT which has become a model in many countries in the world because of its effectiveness and commitment with the environment. The aim of the CST is to turn the concept of sustainability into something real, practical and necessary within the context of tourist competitiveness of the country, aiming to improve the way in which natural and social resources are used, to promote the active participation of the local communities, and to provide a new support for competitiveness of the business sector. Costa Rica has **358 tourist companies with CST**.
3. Since 1996, the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism is the governing body of the beach category of the Ecologic Blue Flag Program (Programa Bandera Azul Ecológica). Together with AYA, aspects related to environmental education are assessed as well as waste management, microbiological quality in sewage water, among others. **Currently, 110 beach committees in Costa Rica have been awarded with the Ecologic Blue Flag Program 2015.**
4. The United States of America is the most important source of tourism for Costa Rica in the world. In 2015, 1 077, 0442 American tourists arrived to Costa Rica (94,5% by plane). Germany is the main generator of tourism for Costa Rica in Europe, exporting 66, 450 germans to our country in 2015.
5. Costa Rica has been a pioneer in eco-tourism, and has been awarded and renowned in this field by the World Tourism Organization (WTO).
6. **Our country has 457 hotels with Tourism Declaration**, which guarantees a varied service around the country, with an offer of 22,771 available rooms, being the country with the largest offer of lodging in Central America.
7. Poas Volcano, located in Alajuela is the volcano with the largest crater in Central America, which turns it into one of the most important destinations in Costa Rica.
8. Costa Rica has a wide variety of microclimates, which makes it possible for the tourist to experience different kinds of weather in a short distance and little time, which has a very positive impact in the trip.
9. Our country has **66 Protected Areas (National Parks, Wild Life Refugees, Biological Reserves, among others)**, which have become important ecological destinations. Only in 2015, these sites reported 1 895 196 visitors both residents and foreigners, which means an increase of 6.5% compare to the year 2014.
10. **Tourism in Costa Rica represents around 9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, which turns it into one of the main economic activities in the country.



4. AIRLINES FLYING TO COSTA RICA AND LOCAL FLIGHTS

Costa Rica has a wide offer to enter and leave the country by air.







Its two main international airports receive hundreds of flights each month from the main cities, allowing a constant mobilization of passengers with modern and secure entering ports. The International Airport Juan Santamaría (Code SJO), is the main airport of the country, and is located in Alajuela. Furthermore, the modern International Airport Daniel Oduber in

Liberia (Code LIR), receives specific flights mainly for tourists who want to visit Guanacaste, Monteverde, and La Fortuna areas. This comfortable airport connects with beautiful beaches in one of the most touristic and important zones of the country.

The following list details the airlines that fly to Costa Rica and their itineraries (routes).

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS ITINERARY TO COSTA RICA BY COUNTRY ⁽¹⁾

	Country	City	Destination	Frequency
 AEROMEXICO	Mexico	Mexico City	San José	Two daily flights
AIR CANADA  <small>*These flights will take place from December 2016 to March 2017</small>	Canada	Montreal Toronto Toronto	Liberia Liberia San Jose	One flight a week on K One flight on K, W, T, and Sun 11 flightst a week *
AIRFRANCE 	France	Paris	San Jose	Winter Two flights a week on Wednesday and Saturday
 Air Panama	Panama	Panama City, Paitilla David	San Jose San Jose	One daily flight One flight on M, W, and F

	Country	City	Destination	Frequency
	Canada	Montreal Toronto Toronto	San Jose Liberia San Jose	One flight on F One flight on F One flight on M
	USA	Los Angeles Los Angeles	Liberia San Jose	One flight on K, T, Sat, and Sun One flight on M, W, F, and Sat
	USA	Charlotte Charlotte Dallas Dallas Miami Miami Filadelfia Phoenix	Liberia San Jose Liberia San Jose Liberia San Jose San Jose San Jose	One flight on Sat and Sun One daily flight One daily flight One daily flight, plus one flight on Sat and Sun Two daily flights, plus one flight on M, K, and W Four daily flights One flight on Sat One daily flight
	Colombia El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Panamá Perú	Bogotá San Andrés San Salvador San Salvador Ciudad de Guatemala Tegucigalpa Ciudad de Panamá Lima	San Jose San Jose Liberia San Jose San Jose San Jose San Jose San Jose	Two daily flights One flight on M, F, and Sun One flight on K, W, T, and F Four daily flights plus one flight on Sun Two daily flights One daily flight Two daily flights, plus one flight on M, K, T, F, Sat, and S One daily flight
	Jamaica	Kingston	San Jose	One flight on K
	England	London	San Jose	Summer One flight on Wednesday and Saturday Winter One flight on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday



	Country	City	Destination	Frequency
 www.condor.com	Germany	Frankfort	San Jose	One flight on M, W, and T
	Guatemala Honduras Nicaragua Panama	Guatemala City Tegucigalpa Managua Panama City Panama	San Jose San Jose San Jose Liberia San Jose	One daily flight plus one flight on M, K, W, T, and F V One daily flight Two daily flights One flight on T and Sun Nine daily flights
	USA	Atlanta Atlanta Los Angeles Los Angeles Minneapolis New York	Liberia San Jose Liberia San Jose Liberia Liberia	Two daily flights Two daily flights plus one on Sat One flight on M, W, and F One daily flight One flight on M, K, W, F, and Sat One flight on K, T, and Sat
 *To start operations on May 9, 2017.	Switzerland	Zurich	San José	Winter Two flights a week on Tuesday and Friday

	Country	City	Destination	Frequency
	Spain	Madrid	San Jose	One daily flight
	Mexico	Mexico City	San Jose	Two daily flights
	USA	Boston Fort Lauderdale New York Orlando	Liberia San José Liberia San José	One flight on Sat and Sun One daily flight One daily flight One daily flight
	Nicaragua	Managua	San Jose	One daily flight
	Nicaragua Panama	Managua Bocas del Toro	San Jose San Jose	One flight on M, W, and F One daily flight



	Country	City	Destination	Frequency
	Nicaragua	Rivas	Liberia	Two flights on M, T, V, Sat, and Sun D
	USA	Baltimore Baltimore Houston Houston	Liberia San Jose Liberia San Jose	One flight on Sat One daily flight One daily flight One daily flight
	USA	Fort Lauderdale Houston	San Jose San Jose	One daily flight plus one flight on K, W, T, V, and Sun One flight on M, K, T, and Sat
	USA	Minneapolis	Liberia	One flight on K, W, F, and Sat
	Canada	Montreal Toronto	Liberia Liberia	One flight on M One flight on M, W, Sat, and F
	UK	London	Liberia	One flight on M
	USA	Chicago Chicago Denver Denver Houston Houston Newark Newark Washington	Liberia San Jose Liberia San Jose Liberia San Jose Liberia San Jose San Jose	Three flights on Sat, plus two on F and one on Sun One flight on F, plus two on Sat, and one on Sun Two flights on Sat One flight on F and Sat Three daily flights, plus one on F and Sun, and two on Sat Four daily flights, plus one on Sun, two on F, and three on Sat One daily flight plus one flight on Sun, and two on Sat Two daily flights, plus one on Sat and Sun One flight on F, Sat, and Sun

	Country	City	Destination	Frequency
	El Salvador	San Salvador	San Jose	One daily flight
	México	Cancun Guadalajara	San Jose San Jose	One flight on T and Sun One flight on T and Sun
	Canada	Calgary Toronto Toronto	Liberia Liberia San José	One flight on M, W, F, and Sat One flight on M, W, and Sat One flight on K and Sun

M = Monday, K = Tuesday, W = Wednesday, T = Thursday, F = Friday, Sat = Saturday, Sun = Sunday

(1) Estimates based on data from OAG, Schedule Analyser, March 2016.



LOCAL FLIGHTS

Costa Rica has different local airports and two airlines which offer domestic flights: Nature Air and Sansa.

INTERNAL DESTINATIONS FROM SAN JOSÉ

Nature Air™ Travels to the following locations:

Arenal
Bahía Drake
Golfito
Liberia
Nosara
Puerto Jiménez
Punta Islita
Quepos/Manuel Antonio
San José
Tamarindo
Tambor
Tortuguero

 SANSAS Travels to the following locations:

Puerto Jiménez
Golfito
Palmar Sur
Bahía Drake
Manuel Antonio/Quepos
Tambor
Tamarindo
Liberia
La Fortuna / Arenal
Limón
Tortuguero
Costa Esmeralda
San Isidro, Pérez Zeledón

For more **information** about the itineraries, visit the website of each airline:



SANSAS REGIONAL: <http://www.flysansa.com/indexcr.asp>



NATURE AIR: <http://www.natureair.com/>



5. COSTA RICA TOURIST PRODUCTS

Costa Rica offers authentic tourist products for the tourist to enjoy real conditions. These products generate an enriching experience in an essential environment with all kind of attractions for national and international tourists to enjoy a unique experience.

Tourist consumption of products and tourist activities reflect this ample variety. There are no isolated tourist destinations or self contained to generate a high demand. On the contrary, there is a series of small destinations that are complemented among them to facilitate its consumption.

SUN AND BEACH

Costa Rica has a privileged place in the heart of Central America, with 51,000 square kilometers of extension and beaches in both oceans, Atlantic and Pacific, apart by a three hour ride by car or a 45 minute ride by plane from San José.

This product allows enjoying the beach for entertainment purposes, to practice sports or just rest. Beaches are surrounded by trees, nature and low affluence of tourists.

The Caribbean zone is characterized by its variety of aquatic ecosystems and its beaches of white and black sand, ideal to practice activities related to nature and sea, such as surfing, scuba diving, sunbathing, and walking along the seaside.

The Pacific coast has many tourist centers and beaches such as Esterills, Jaco, Hermosa, Boca Ba-

rranca, and Marino Ballena are preferred to practice surf. Also, Pavones is famous for its long left wave.

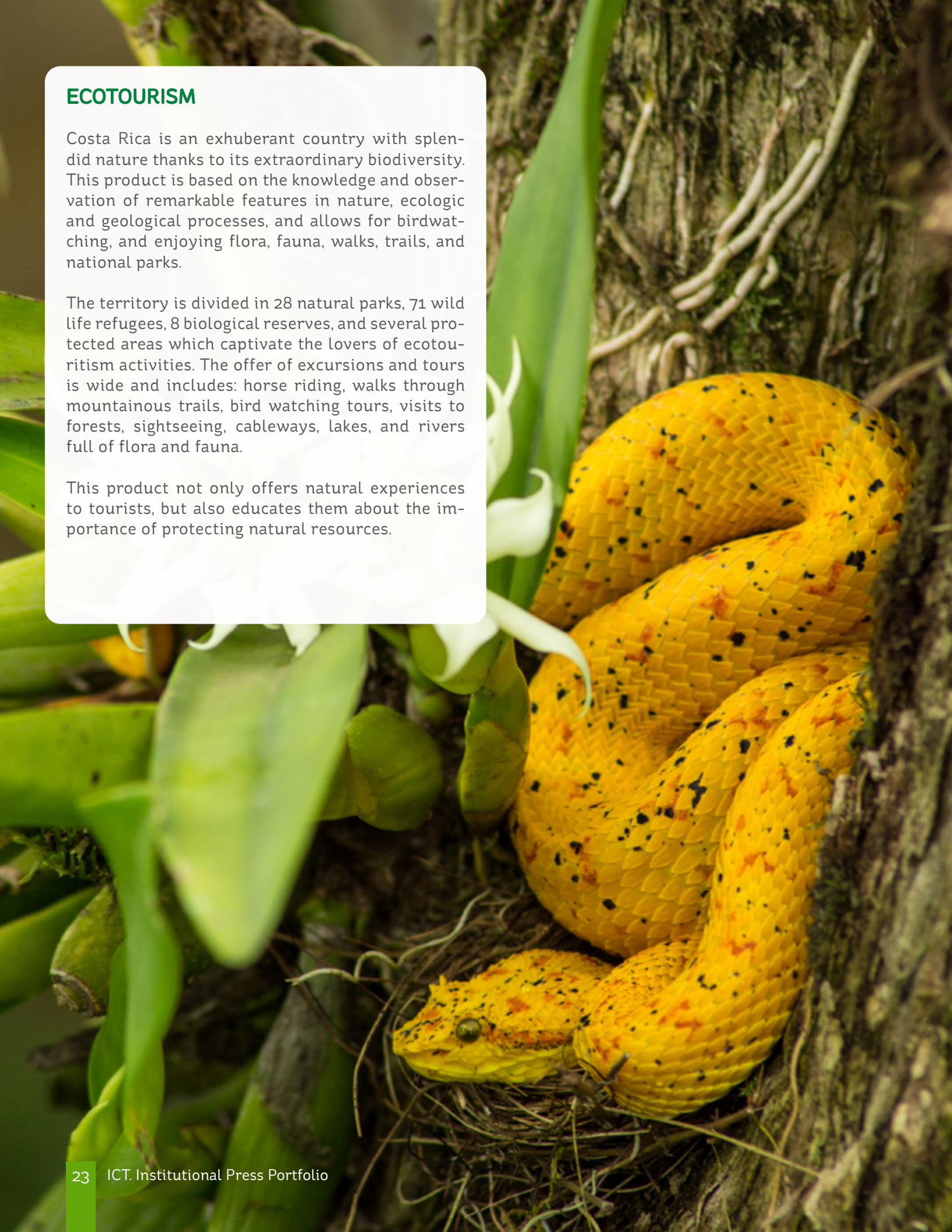


ECOTOURISM

Costa Rica is an exuberant country with splendid nature thanks to its extraordinary biodiversity. This product is based on the knowledge and observation of remarkable features in nature, ecologic and geological processes, and allows for birdwatching, and enjoying flora, fauna, walks, trails, and national parks.

The territory is divided in 28 natural parks, 71 wild life refuges, 8 biological reserves, and several protected areas which captivate the lovers of ecotourism activities. The offer of excursions and tours is wide and includes: horse riding, walks through mountainous trails, bird watching tours, visits to forests, sightseeing, cableways, lakes, and rivers full of flora and fauna.

This product not only offers natural experiences to tourists, but also educates them about the importance of protecting natural resources.



ADVENTURE

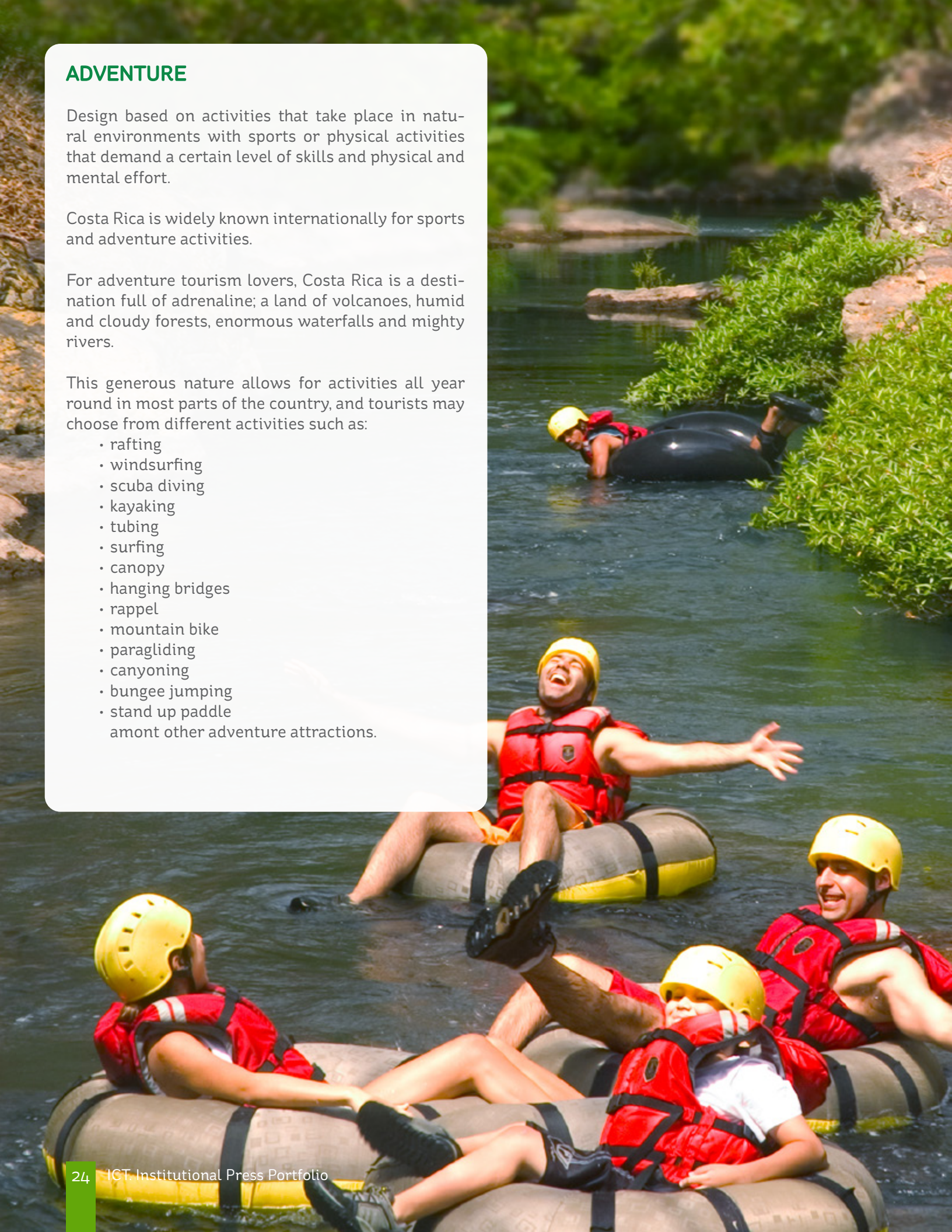
Design based on activities that take place in natural environments with sports or physical activities that demand a certain level of skills and physical and mental effort.

Costa Rica is widely known internationally for sports and adventure activities.

For adventure tourism lovers, Costa Rica is a destination full of adrenaline; a land of volcanoes, humid and cloudy forests, enormous waterfalls and mighty rivers.

This generous nature allows for activities all year round in most parts of the country, and tourists may choose from different activities such as:

- rafting
 - windsurfing
 - scuba diving
 - kayaking
 - tubing
 - surfing
 - canopy
 - hanging bridges
 - rappel
 - mountain bike
 - paragliding
 - canyoning
 - bungee jumping
 - stand up paddle
- among other adventure attractions.



RURAL TOURISM

This product includes two types of tourism:

Community-Based Rural Tourism (TRC)

Tourism experiences that are sustainably planned and integrated to rural areas and developed by local people who organize themselves for the benefit of the community.

Rural Tourism (TR)

Tourism experiences sustainably integrated to the rural area and developed by individual business people.

In both cases the essential elements are that the services are developed in rural areas with products based on this rural condition; the assets are in the hands of the local people. It allows for the diversification of traditional tourism services; it makes use of the knowledge of the natural heritage: it promotes recreational activities and harmony with the culture of receiving communities, as well as promoting agricultural culture and traditional technologies.

Likewise, this tourism product is a means for the generation of local sustainable development, and as such, it has a social purpose. The activities are varied and include tours of productive farms, lodging in local cabins and traditional gastronomy.

Rural tourism is related to the natural heritage, cultural elements of this rural condition that in turn reinforce the local identity. This is a differentiating factor which allows to meet a need for experiences that are authentic, diverse, exotic, and experiential.

In this way, the operation is not constrained to specific sites but rather to areas located inside and outside the tourism destinations that aim to meet future needs and demands.

Community-based rural tourism is one of the initiatives that is, little by little, becoming an important tool for the development of rural communities that show potential and are able to compete with other high quality attractions. Their assets, history, nature, talent and trust that are part of the rural world are a unique recipe in the world; it is impossible to

imitate them due to their authenticity. This is community-based rural tourism: a one of a kind tourism product, an important tool for the development of communities and for the strengthening of Costa Rican identity.



WATER TOURISM

They are water-related tourism, recreational, and sport activities that aim to offer the tourist a life experience on a boat. It includes activities such as sailing, sport and tourism fishing, boat tours, and the like.

These kinds of activities are developed in both coasts and include rivers, lagoons, and reserves, as long as they are legal.

Sport fishing requires specialized conditions such as fuel or services in tourist marinas or berths that are formalized and sustainable.

WELLNESS PURA VIDA

Wellness tourism represents one of the tourism products that are in vogue around the world. It has great potential for Costa Rica since the country has been positioned as a site for the prevention of work-related stress, which is considered a global epidemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and one of the most expensive chronic conditions according to the World Economic Forum.

This type of tourism is included as a motivation for vacation, recreation, and leisure; it is also associated to the improvement of the visitor's mental and physical health through the use of services designed for dealing with stress and fatigue.

The country is already positioned as a leader in nature and adventure tourism, so it already has the necessary conditions to become a paradise for those looking to detox from stress and the daily routine. Being in contact with the environment and the special treatment offered by Costa Ricans offer the tourist an authentic life experience, which is a motivator not only for recommending the destination, but also for visiting it again.

Wellness Pura Vida tourism includes services such as outdoor activities, massages, spas, chiropractors, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, thermal waters, rest in quiet natural spaces, contact with nature, natural food, and others.

A wellness tourist will also consume typical tourism services (hotels, restaurants, transportation, attractions and others) associated to vacation travels.

Because wellness tourism is part of the vacation and leisure motivation, it is part of the current positioning in international markets. So, any marketing and promotion effort is in line with the support for developing products related to wellness tourism.



BUSINESS

The product Business covers activities related to the organization, promotion, sales and distribution of meetings and events.

Business tourism is an industry that has experienced rapid growth around the world, and it represents a driver of tourism activity since activities increase during the months of May, June, September and November, a traditional low season for tourism in our country.

Besides, it generates many benefits for the local economy by promoting investments, employment, development and wellbeing of the people. For that reason, the country has worked in an aggressive strategy to promote Costa Rica as a destination that has the tools, infrastructure, and competitiveness to capture and service this market.

Products and services include:

- Governmental meetings
- Business meetings
- Members meetings
- Incentive trips for companies
- Seminars
- Congresses
- Conferences
- Conventions
- Exhibits and fairs

For the development of Business tourism, it is necessary to have a network of providers that support tourism services. Among them are lodging options, gastronomy centers, bars, and similar businesses that have tourism interest, as well as companies that specialize in event planning and suppliers for those services.

This tourism product will be furthered by the construction of the Costa Rican Convention Center, which will meet the needs for the Meetings, Incentives, Congresses/Conferences, and Events sector (MICE) by incorporating sustainable design and state of the art technology to boost Costa Rican business strengths.

This building of 15,000 square meters located 8 kilometers from the Juan Santamaría International Airport will feature area for exhibits, convention rooms, VIP meeting rooms, press room, kitchen, restaurants, parking area, among others. It will be capable of hosting over 3,000 people in a sustainable, innovating, and spacious environment.



COSTA RICAN BIRD ROUTE

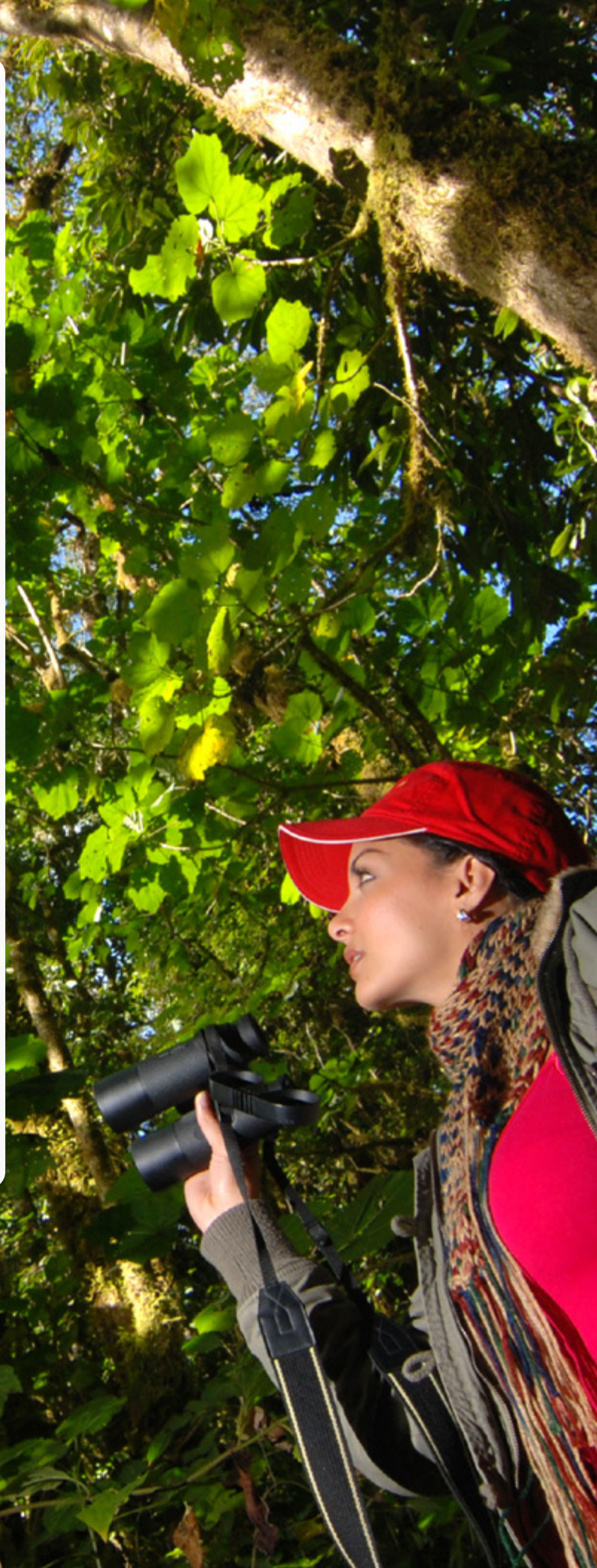
Birdwatching has become one of the most important tourism activities around the world. It is estimated that 9 million people are members of specialized international organizations in this area.

Costa Rica is fifth in the world as preferred destination for birdwatching (<http://media.peru.info/impp/PerfildelObservadordeAves.pdf>) due to aspects such as diversity and infrastructure. People also take advantage of family and business trips to engage in birdwatching.

For birdwatchers, Costa Rica offers an extremely rich and researched bird population. It is estimated that there are around 900 species and 220 migratory species, mainly from North America.

The National Bird Route is made up of 12 hubs or sites that grant access to specific observation sites of great diversity. They sometimes concur with the Tourism Development Centers that are constituted by several local communities, reserves or national parks. This increases the potential for tourism related activities along the route. Also, those places have ideal conditions for the development of birdwatching tourism: access, paths, local guides, services, information about the birds, among others.

This route results in public management processes and the improvement of local tourism services that have a positive impact on bird watching in the country. It also strengthens the local economic activity to contribute with the sustainable development of communities and the population at large. All this will help Costa Rica positioned as one of the best places for birdwatching.





6. DESTINATION DIFFERENTIATION

COSTA RICAN GASTRONOMY: TRADITION AND INNOVATION PROGRAM

This training program on traditional gastronomy and cocktail making is part of the destination differentiation and consolidation strategy.

This component consists on the development of training and promotion of traditional Costa Rican cuisine and cocktails as a differentiating element in the tourist services offered in different regions of the country.

It was born in 2010 as an Alliance between three organizations: Costa Rica Tourism Board (ICT), Ministry of Culture (MCJ), and National Institute for Vocational Training (INA). It took advantage of the strengths of the three organizations. MCJ's research

on traditional cuisine of each province, INA's training experience in gastronomy, and ICT's strategy for destination differentiation that incorporates cultural identity.

Since 2009, the program for the revival of traditional Costa Rican cuisine has trained chefs, cooks, baristas, bartenders, and others at the national level in order to promote better culinary offerings of traditional dishes in restaurants. This is accomplished by training the personnel in the different Tourism Planning Units in the country, as well as by fostering a better appreciation for Costa Rican culture. Its objectives are based on incorporating cultural components in diverse tourist services as differentiating and diversifying elements in tourist products and destinations.

YEAR	ACTION	# Trainees
2010 - 2011	24 Traditional food workshops	881 chef-cooks
2009 - 2011	38 Barista workshops	760 baristas
2009 - 2011	Food handling	984 people
2012	12 Traditional food workshops	441 Chef-cooks
	12 Cocktail workshops	240 bartenders
2013	10 Traditional food workshops	400 Chef-cooks
	10 Cocktail workshops	400 bartenders
2014	9 Traditional cuisine and cocktail workshops	209 Chef-cooks
2015	10 Traditional cuisine and cocktail workshops	250 Chef-cooks

It also aims to foster local capacities so that tourism SMEs diversify their current services by incorporating gastronomy and cocktails as part of their renewed and differentiated products for tourism.

To raise awareness in tourism businesspeople so they can renew their offerings by incorporating cultural components that would differentiate their destinations.

Lastly, to recover the taste, flavors, and preparations local to each region as a transcendental element to strengthen local, regional, and national identities.

In summary, this program aims to strengthen the tourism development model that has characterized and differentiated Costa Rica in offering products that foster a democratization of the income generated by the tourism industry, by giving SMEs diversity of options regardless of their size, location, and services offered; likewise, it adds an authentic element to the tourists' travel experiences.

RURAL TOURISM AND COMMUNITY-BASED RURAL TOURISM PROGRAM

This program focuses on supporting rural tourism and community-based rural tourism companies so they can offer a high quality alternative for the national and international tourist to enjoy an authentic Costa Rican experience. It also aims to help companies and communities be more competitive in the market, promote community self-management, the intelligent use of natural resources and their conservation, diversify income sources and improve the quality of life of people from different regions of the country.

Community-based rural tourism experiences are created by co-ops or community organizations that own private natural reserves, farms, or interest areas, or those that are located near regions of cultural and environmental interest. These communities offer innovative experiences that involve tourism services such as lodging, tours, and crafts combined with impressive natural resources and local culture (farmer, indigenous, or Afro-Caribbean cultures). This allows visitors to discover new cultures, explore amazing places, benefit and share with communities that are involved in the conservation of natural resources. All this is accomplished while they have fun and rest.

PROJECTION OF THE LOCAL CULTURE

The Costa Rica Tourism Board (ICT) implements training and craft creation programs.

This initiative seeks to differentiate destinations and show visitors part of the cultural richness of the country. It has organized different workshops for artisans in order to offer them tools to improve the marketing of their products (beautiful high quality products).

The program "Crafts with identity" was created in 2011 and aims to train artisans from different tourist destinations so they can offer high quality products that reflect the Costa Rican identity and would provide tourists with an attractive product, and a life story that is part of our local culture.

This process has a positive impact on the creation



of innovative crafts and utilitarian products of high quality; this in turn has an impact on the organizational aspects of the craft collectives and strengthens their self-esteem by marketing and positioning their products. This implies not only incorporating identity elements in the products, but also providing support for their organization, training in management, brand creation and registration, promotion and marketing of products in events or fairs.

In the cultural area, ICT has been offering training to craft collectives from the Craft with Identity Program. Up to now, there are eight collectives from Puntarenas, Alajuela, Limón, Cartago, Golfito, Liberia and Quepos.

Collectives:

- Puerto – Puerto, Puntarenas (see catalogue)
- Arroz con Mango, Alajuela
- Limón Dulce, Limón
- La Garua, Cartago
- La Zona, Golfito
- La Huaca, Liberia
- Cardumen, Quepos

Those groups offer products that showcase the local identity; that becomes their differentiating element expressed as originality and quality in the crafts they exhibit and sell.

The Cultural Groups Program supports and promotes Costa Rican cultural manifestations such as dance, music, declarations, coperos, theater, and others that show the national identity. They are also a differentiating element in the Costa Rican tourist services supply. This cultural heritage includes local rhythms, music, and traditional dances from Guanacaste, Caribbean music, boleros from the central valley, and the tropical rhythms from Puntarenas.

It focuses on promoting culture as a driving force for inclusive social and economic development. By investing in creativity, ICT foster the emergence of dynamic cultural sectors that have an impact on developing countries.

This initiative belongs to the new Culture and Tourism Program that Works with local organization and people to establish permanent spaces to offer the local and international tourist a high quality cultural tourism product such as music, dance, identity crafts, services and tours, among others.





7. TOURISM PLANNING UNITS AND THEIR MAIN ATTRACTIONS

CENTRAL VALLEY

The doorway to the country...

It offers the possibility to enjoy a variety of cultural and natural tourist attractions that include the best museums in the country: Gold, Jade, National, Costa Rican Art, La Salle Natural Sciences, Contemporary Art and Design, and Children's Museums, among others. It also includes the best architectural jewel of the country: The National Theater.

The national parks located in the Central Valley protect the main volcanos in the area: Poás Braulio Carrillo, Irazú, and Turrialba. All of them have access for people to visit and see their birds, landscapes, craters, and forests.

The capital city, San José, concentrates the majority of governmental services, nevertheless, the other main provinces, Alajuela, Heredia and Cartago, also have quality commercial and tourist services.

The Central Valley offers tourist two areas of extraordinary beauty that are in themselves great attractions: Turrialba and Valle de los Santos. Rural towns are scenic and offer a glimpse of the Costa Rica of the past: houses made of bahareque, big coffee plantations, trapiches, and dairies.

Did you know...

The rural areas in the Central Valley are appropriate for tourists to horseback ride in places such as Turrialba, Santa María de Dota, Atenas, Palmares, Zarcero, Escazú, Santa Ana, among others.



CENTRAL PACIFIC

This region stretches from the city of Puntarenas until the mouth of Barú River in the area known as Dominical de Osa. There are three cities of tourist value and development: Quepos, Jacó and Puntarenas. It covers the islands on the Nicoya Gulf, since access to them is mainly through Puntarenas.

This region is characterized by humid and rainy weather, and so the beaches and hills closer to the coast have great biodiversity. There are tropical forests that transition from dry forest to tropical rain forest. These ecosystems are habitat to numerous plant and animal species that are protected in several wildlife areas.

Part of this area is also Coco Island, even though it is located almost 342 miles from the port of Puntarenas, province the island belongs to.

The main attractions of this region are:

- Coasts
- Protected wildlife areas

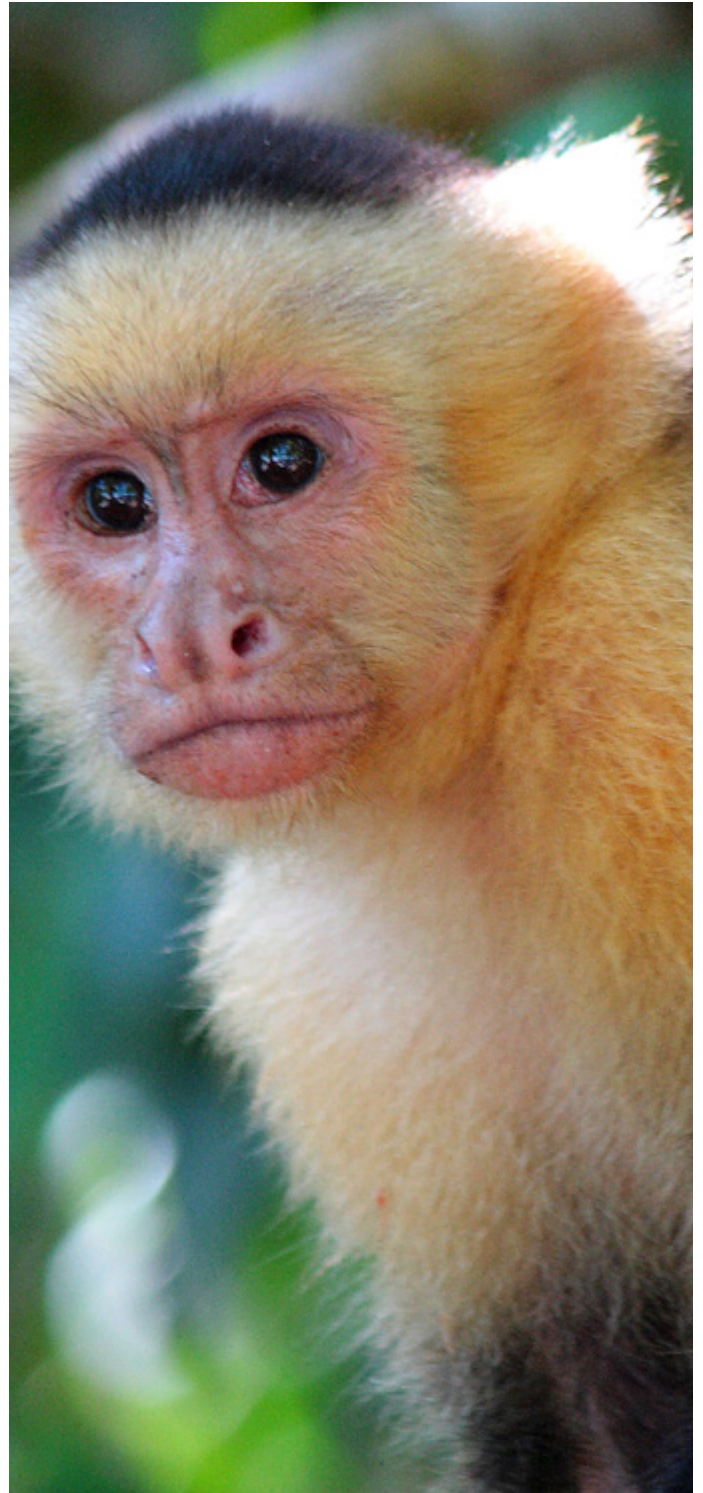
The coast is made up of several beautiful beaches, several of them are around two hours away from San José.

Wildlife areas include wildlife refuges, national parks, and biological reserves.

Other important attractions are cultural and recreational in nature. There are also important events organized in this region, mainly sports events. The scenic beauty traveling from Caldera to Quepos and Manuel Antonio is amazing.

Did you know...

The Manuel Antonio National Park protects 12 islands that are excellent refuges for a diversity of seabirds.



SOUTH PACIFIC

The entry point and main distribution center is the city of Pérez Zeledón, which borders the district and includes attractions such as the Nauyaca Waterfalls, Platanillo and Barú river. That river is the beginning of the coastal sector that reaches up to Punta Burica, covering a length of 490 kilometers.

The main activities include enjoying the beach and marine resources, such as the observation of whales and dolphins, mangroves, landscapes, reptiles, sport fishing, surfing, hiking in national parks, professional diving, hiking to the summit of Chirripó, botanical gardens, and impressive waterfalls in protected areas. Those are some of the tourist attractions accessed through this information site.

Did you know...

Sport fishing can be freely enjoyed thanks to the diversity of Golfo Dulce and several communities and sites that offer their services in a sustainable and responsible way. Among them we find Puerto Jiménez, Golfito and Zancudo..

- The main product is **ecotourism**, especially around:
 - Sierpe-Térraba Wetland
 - Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve
 - Marino Ballena National Park
 - Isla del Caño Biological Reserve
 - Corcovado National Park
- There is great potential for **beach tourism** in the areas of:
 - Dominical-Piñuela
 - Playa Platanares
 - Zancudo y Pavones
- **Mountain products** are identified in the Cordillera de Talamanca. San Gerardo de Rivas and San Vito de Coto Brus give access to the Chirripó National Park and La Amistad World Heritage Site.



PUNTARENAS AND ISLANDS IN THE GULF OF NICOYA

Puntarenas and islands in the Gulf of Nicoya cover an area of 2,439 km and 425 coast kilometers. This unit is characterized by its spatial discontinuity since it includes the Nicoya Peninsula and the city of Puntarenas.

Traveling between both coastlines is done by boat. The unit covers from Punta Conejo, to the south of Puerto Caldera up to the mouth of Bongo River.

Puntarenas es una de las regiones turísticas más importantes de Costa Rica.

There are several islands, inlets, beaches, and natural treasures of great beauty that make it a famous tourist destination. Its center is the city of Puntarenas, which functions as lodging, distribution, stop, and tour center of the area. It offers mostly traditional hotels and cabins close to the sea, and also the famous All Inclusive hotels.

The peninsular area has important tourist developments such Tambor, Santa Teresa and Montezuma; they have amazing natural beauties full of beaches and sun. Also famous are the Cabo Blanco Absolute Natural Reserve, San Lucas, Chira, Tortuga, and Coco Island.

The area of Monteverde, located north of Puntarenas city, is one of the most important areas both locally and internationally. It is famous worldwide for its efforts in the conservation of nature and a lifestyle centered on the respect of nature.

Did you know...

The diversity of flora and fauna in natural areas, the coastal landscapes, the cultural aspects make photography one of the most popular activities in the area.



THE NORTHERN PLAINS

The northern plains feature several protected areas, lakes, lagoons, volcanoes, rivers, and waterfalls. In order to make the most of these beauties, there are good tourism developments in the area, including services and sites for adventure tourism and the enjoyment of nature.

Because it rains a lot in this area, there are rainforests and fertile plains that house seabirds, reptiles, mammals and the prehistoric gar fish, which makes them a preferred site for people interested in wildlife.

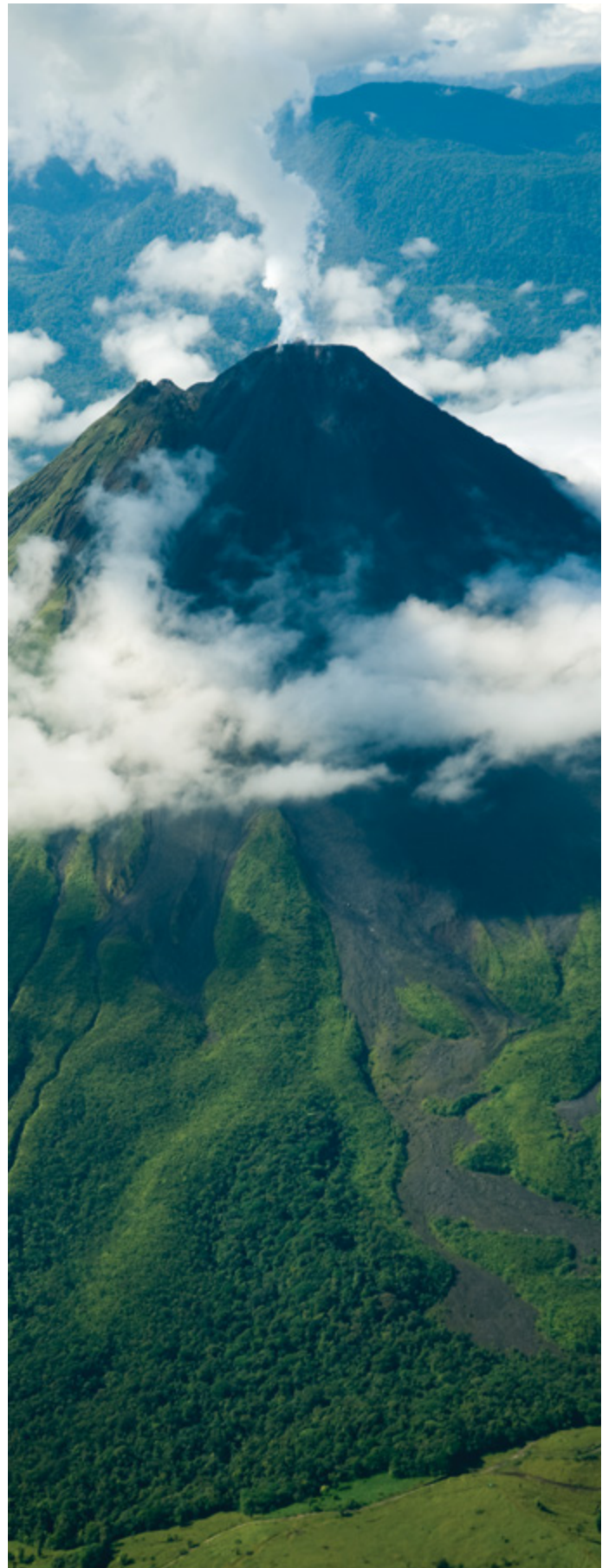
There are rivers where adventure sports and nature watching are practiced: Peñas Blancas, San Carlos, Toro, Puerto Viejo and Sarapiquí. Some of them are very important for water transportation.

The biodiversity in the district of Sarapiquí makes it a well-known place for scientific research. It is also the habitat of species in danger such as the green macaw.

The Arenal volcano is located 4 miles from Fortuna, it covers 12.7 square miles and has been active since July 29, 1968. It has two different types of vegetation. One has exuberant vegetation and a great diversity of wildlife; the other is a wild atmosphere with lava and sand flow resulting from the eruptions of the volcano. It is the main attraction in the area. This area is also famous for its thermal waters, an ideal place to relax while enjoying nature.

Did you know...

There are tourist companies in several communities that have specially created facilities for practicing adventure tourism, including hanging bridges, natural paths, and walks through tree-tops. Among those communities we find: Fortuna, La Virgen and Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí.



GUANACASTE

With a total area of 9 529 km² and more than 700 km of coast, the Guanacaste tourist unit covers the Costa Rican Pacific coast from the limit with Nicaragua up to the mouth of Bongo river in the Nicoya peninsula.

This unit houses one important part of the Costa Rican cultural and natural heritage. For this reason, there are several protected areas that include ocean, land, mountain, and coastal ecosystems with exuberant wildlife.

The unparalleled beauty of the landscapes ranges from the tropical dry forest to the low pre-mountain forest. Its warm weather and fertile nature have made Guanacaste one of the most visited places both by local and international visitors; it is also one of the areas of greater development that includes high investment hotels with the potential for direct demand. This region also has perfect mountains to practice canopy and other adventure sports.

Along the Guanacaste coastline there are many beaches that have the warm waters typical of the Pacific Ocean. The landscape is wonderful. There are beaches with white sand and peaceful ocean of deep blues.

North of the unit, there are two distribution centers: Liberia and Santa Cruz, which are in turn related to five tourism development centers: Papagayo, El Coco, Flamingo, Conchal and Tamarindo. To the south, there is Nicoya, a distribution center, and Samara, a development center.

Did you know...

The possibilities for tourism-related activities in Guanacaste are many: recreation, sports and rest, health, culture, adventure, and nature.



CARIBBEAN

This tourism unit covers 9 177 km² and 320 km of coastline. It lies in the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, from the San Juan River to the Sixaola River on the border with Panama.

The city of Limón is located in the central sector of this unit, and it is a stop and distribution center for tourism activities.

North of this unit the main attractions are the nestling of green turtles on the beaches inside Tortugue-ro National Park and Barra del Colorado National Wildlife Refuge, a great place for sport fishing of sea bass, shad and others. There is also a system of river channels that unite the port of Moín with Barra del Colorado. The channels are a unique means of transportation.

This unit features a peculiar blend of beach, natural resources, and Afro-Caribbean culture in the towns of Cahuita, Puerto Viejo and Gandoca-Manzanillo. They are located in the south part of the unit and offer high quality beaches, and a combination of adventure sports with natural history, culture, gastro-nomy, and music.

Attractions include:

- Coral reefs
- Beaches with sand of varied colors (black, yellow, gray)
- Coastal vegetation
- Pre-mountain forest

Did you know...

Among its most popular attractions, the Caribbean features scenic roads, adventure sports, bike trips, beaches, and mountains.

