

# Welcome to Costa Rica

*“Bienvenido”*  
(bee-en-veh-nee-doh)

Squirrel monkeys

**IMAGINE ZOOMING ACROSS** the top of a rainforest on a canopy zipline. Or getting an up-close look at the smoking crater of a volcano. Or taking pictures of troops of squirrel monkeys swinging from tree branch to tree branch in the jungle. Those are just some of the thrilling activities that kids and their families enjoy when they visit the beautiful and tropical country – **COSTA RICA.**

# Where in the World Is Costa Rica?



**COSTA RICA IS ONE** of seven countries in Central America. It is located between Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the southeast. It also lies between the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Caribbean Sea to the east.

Costa Rica is not a very big country. In fact, it's slightly smaller than West Virginia. But it gets more tourists each year than any other Central American country.

# Cool Facts About Costa Rica

Some **ornithologists** say that Costa Rica is the hummingbird capital of the world!



The largest uninhabited island in the world is Costa Rica's **Isla del Coco**. It is 360 miles (600 km) from the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

**The sun rises and sets in Costa Rica at the same time every day of the year. Can you guess why?**

*As of 2014, Claudia Poll and her sister Silvia are the only two Costa Ricans to win a medal in the Olympics. They both won medals in swimming events.*



# National Hero: Juan Santamaría

**APRIL 11 IS AN IMPORTANT DAY** in Costa Rica. It's a national holiday, like Martin Luther King Jr. day in the United States. It honors a national hero named Juan Santamaría.

In 1856, foreign invaders were trying to conquer Costa Rica. In one important battle, the Costa Rican army was losing. The enemy had the advantage. They were in a building near the center of town.

The general of the Costa Rican army needed someone to carry a torch to the building and set it on fire. The young Santamaría volunteered. Sadly, he was **mortally** wounded on his way. But he still managed to throw the torch and set fire to the building. As a result, the Costa Rican army was then able to drive the enemy out of town and win the battle.

Juan Santamaría was only 25 years old at the time.

*The statue of Juan Santamaría with a torch in one hand and his rifle in the other stands as a symbol of national freedom in Costa Rica.*

# Landmarks and Attractions

## Zipline Tours

**NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO** in Costa Rica, there's a good chance that a zipline tour is not too far away. What's a zipline?

It's a fast, fun, exhilarating way to get a bird's eye view of Costa Rica's amazing rainforests.

In its basic form, a zipline is a strong steel cable that is strung between two platforms. The platforms are attached high up on trees in the rainforest.

You put on a harness and attach yourself to the zipline. Then, off you go, sailing from one tree to the next.

Ziplining is not a new activity. It goes back hundreds of years to ancient China. Back then, there was a practical reason for ziplines. They were a way to help get people across rivers when there were no bridges.

Today, there are zipline adventures throughout the world. One of the longest is more than 930 miles (1,500 kilometers) long. In another you fly over the rainforest face forward, stretched out like Superman. You can even cross between two countries – Spain and Portugal – on a zipline.



# An **Imaginary** Interview with a **Scarlet Macaw**



How many different kinds of birds are in Costa Rica?



Lots! Actually, there are more than 894 species. But I'm the prettiest, don't you think?



Are there snakes in Costa Rica?



Are there any amphibians?

There are 175 species. About 85% are frogs. Read about one on page 31.

Sure. In fact, there are 20 different kinds of venomous snakes. In total, there are 225 different kinds of reptiles.

# Costa Rican Wildlife

## Red-eyed Tree Frog



**NEXT TO THE MONKEYS**, the red-eyed tree frog is probably one of the most popular animals in Costa Rica.

They live in the trees of Costa Rica's rainforests, rarely, if ever, coming down to the ground. Tiny suction cups on the bottom of their webbed feet hold them onto leaves of the forest. They have long sticky tongues to catch crickets and other insects.

What's with the eyes? Actually, they are a means of self-defense. They keep their eyes shut most of the time. But when they sense danger, they open their eyes suddenly, scaring any would-be predator to death.

Who wouldn't love these adorable amphibians?

A black spider monkey is hanging from a tree branch in a lush green forest. The monkey's long tail is wrapped around the branch, and its body is suspended. The background is filled with various green plants and trees.

# The Spider Monkey

The **LARGE** spider monkey is the largest monkey in Costa Rica.

The **spider monkey** can weigh as much as 20 pounds (9 kg) with arms that are much longer than its legs. Its tail is also longer than the length of its body and head.

It's the only Costa Rican monkey not found in the Manuel Antonio rainforest.

## Geoffroy's Spider Monkey At-a-Glance

**Length (body):** 14 to 26 inches (35 to 66 cm).

**Tail:** Up to 35 in (89 cm) long.

**Weight:** 12-20 lbs (5.4-9 kg).

**Diet:** Omnivorous (nuts, seeds, fruits, insects).

**Lifespan:** About 20 years.