



Serendipity Adventures, Inc.

Serendipity de Costa Rica, S.A.

P.O. Box 2325 • Ann Arbor, MI 48106

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Phone Toll free USA/Canada (888) 226-5050

Costa Rica: (Country code 506) Phone 2558-1000, FAX 2558-1010

Reservation:

NOTICE OF RISK

Serendipity Adventures, Inc. and Serendipity Costa Rica, S.A. have advised me that there are risks and dangers involved in participating in their adventure expedition. The dangers include possible injury or death caused by any of the activities provided, including but not limited to: hiking, biking and driving on and off roads, ascending on ropes and harnesses into trees, structures, natural formations or anchor points, rappelling, balloon inflation, flight and landing, white water rafting, rubber Duckies, kayaking, horseback riding, hiking, swimming, scuba,

climbing, insect and snake bites, power boating, animal bites, sailing, hiking on or near volcanoes, food poisoning, fishing, surfing, and windsurfing. I participate in these activities of my own free will, recognize that the element of risk is a necessary part of the enjoyment of this trip, and I hold Serendipity Adventures, Inc. and Serendipity Costa Rica, S.A. harmless for my safety beyond normal due care. By joining this trip I acknowledge that I have been informed of these risks.

TERMS

RESERVING: Reservations are confirmed upon receipt of \$600 deposit per person. **CANCELLATION:** Full refund, less \$190 per person, if requested in writing at least 65 days before start date. No refund if cancellation received less than 65 days before start date. Final payment at least 60 days before start date. Full payment should accompany reservations made less than 45 days before departure. Credit cards (AMEX, VISA and Mastercard) may be used for the deposit. The above price assumes final balance paid by cash, personal or corporate check, or money order. Any other final balance payment will result in a 4% additional processing fee.

CHANGES IN ITINERARY AFTER TRIP CONFIRMED: while Serendipity always strives to be accommodating, changes in hotel arrangements and activities are usually impossible to make once a trip has been confirmed. Upgrades and changes are sometimes available at extra cost. Before placing your deposit for the proposed itinerary, please speak with your Serendipity itinerary designer if you have concerns about any hotel, bed arrangements, activities, transfers or food.

WEATHER RISKS: As with all outdoor sports, scheduled balloon flights, rafting, climbing, air and ground transportation and other activities are weather dependent. Activities may be rearranged to accommodate weather conditions, or canceled in the interests of safety.

CANCELED ACTIVITIES: Guides and pilots may decline to take guests who present a risk to themselves or others, who are inebriated or incapacitated in a way

that creates a hazard for conducting the operation arranged. Serendipity will not refund for cancelled activities if participants have medical conditions or incapacitation not revealed prior to purchasing their Serendipity travels.

INSURANCE: Car theft is EXTREMELY COMMON all over Costa Rica. Please avoid carrying extra "things" and then leaving them in the car when away from your hotel. Serendipity is not able to buy insurance in Costa Rica on vehicle contents or mysterious disappearance from vehicles, hotels, etc. Serendipity must therefore limit its liability to no more than \$100 per person for loss of personal possessions. We **STRONGLY recommend** travel insurance for lost or stolen luggage, trip cancellation and medical emergency available thru your travel agent or www.travelguard.com.

RELEASE/SURVEY FORM: All participants will be required to sign and return the release/survey form prior to departure.

TIPPING: We are constantly asked what is appropriate. Our answer, of course, is that any tip is optional. Our guides, like fishing charter guides or naturalist guides, usually receive about 7-12% of the total trip cost, depending on the quality of the service he or she has provided and on your preference. The principal guide shares his/her tip with the 8-16 other guides -- river guides, horseback guides, climbing guides, naturalist guides, drivers, etc. who will be with you at different times during the adventures. This policy of "lumping" the tip with the principal guide eliminates a need to constantly be concerned about tipping etiquette in Costa Rica).

AIR FARE to Costa Rica not included. We are pleased to help you locating best routes and fares.



Reservation:

Name(s) _____

Address(es) _____

Phone: DAY _____

Phone: EVE _____

Passport: Country _____ Number: _____ EXPIRES: _____

Passport: Country _____ Number: _____ EXPIRES: _____

Passport: Country _____ Number: _____ EXPIRES: _____

Passport: Country _____ Number: _____ EXPIRES: _____

(please send additional sheet if needed for personal data)

URGENT: PASSPORTS ARE MANDATORY FOR ALL AGES. PASSPORTS CANNOT EXPIRE WITHIN 1 MONTH OF YOUR ARRIVAL DATE OR YOU MAY BE REFUSED ENTRY INTO COSTA RICA

ARRIVAL: Date & Time/Airline/Flight #: _____

DEPARTURE: Date & Time/Airline/Flight #: _____

In case of emergency contact: _____ Relationship _____

Phone: DAY _____

Phone: EVE _____

WHAT TO EXPECT on DIFFERENT OPTIONS WE OFFER

In all cases, remember that YOUR PERSONAL acceptable level of risk is really something Serendipity's sales staff and guides cannot decide for you. If you are uncomfortable about a risk or danger, you **MUST** tell your guide before committing to an activity which is beyond your willingness to take risk or injury.

MOUNTAIN BIKES, CLIMBING, RAPPELLING: These sports often end up with tumbles, bumps, bruises, and occasionally broken bones. Please let your Serendipity leader know the TRUTH about how you feel, how much experience you have, and how comfortable you are with the risk. Your Serendipity leader will explain the options, which include canceling altogether if you are not sure this is what you want to do, and give you some rudimentary instruction. While guides are first-aid competent, we really want to avoid using the first-aid skills, which means avoiding going too far beyond your capabilities.

WHITEWATER RAFTING: Rafting requires moderate upper body strength, good balance, and the ability to work as a team. **It is likely** that some people will fall out of the raft, and it is possible that participants will get bruised, swallow a bit of river water, and generally get tossed about. This is part of the fun of rafting. Your raft guide will brief you on safety procedures, but you should be aware before committing to a raft trip that it is not unusual for people to fall out of the raft and sustain (minor) injuries.

BALLOONING Balloon flights in Costa Rica are made at sunrise because the air is most stable at this time. The flight will last from 45 minutes to one and a half hours and may reach altitudes of 7,500 ft. The balloon in flight is very serene, but the start and the end can be rough. **It is probable that at the end of the flight the basket will stop suddenly, then tip on its side,** requiring all passengers to "hang on" as the balloon deflates, and it is probable you'll need to walk out of a landing field which includes very rough terrain, mud, or steep ascent or descent. Wear long pants and strong shoes! The pilot briefing will go over the procedures to follow before and during flight, and advise you when to hold on for landing..



Reservation:

NOTICE TO PARTICIPANTS

Serendipity is unable to purchase insurance in Costa Rica against theft and mysterious disappearance of personal effects from vehicles and hotel rooms. Serendipity must therefore limit our liability for personal items to \$200 per person. Serendipity carries medical insurance in Costa Rica which covers injuries sustained in our operation, under the National Health Plan. We recommend that you purchase special travel insurance for theft, trip cancellation, and emergency medical attention. Travel health and cancellation insurance is available through your travel agency or through Travel Guard, <http://www.travelguard.com/>, 1.800.826.4919.

**Sign and return Pages 1, 2, and 3 TO P.O. Box 2325, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 or
 FAX (from USA dial 011 for International), Costa Rica country code 506 +- 2558-1010 or
 Scan pages and send as attachment to costarica@serendipityadventures.com**

While Serendipity Adventures avoids unnecessary risk, there is nonetheless risk involved. Serendipity Adventures, Inc. and Serendipity Costa Rica, S.A. have advised me that there are risks and dangers involved in participating in their adventure expedition. The dangers include possible injury or death caused by any of the activities provided, including but not limited to biking or driving on public roads, biking or driving off public roads, hiking, swimming, scuba, balloon flight and landing, white water rafting, rubber duckies, kayaking, horseback riding, tree ascents, rock and hill climbing, rappelling, insect and snake bites, power boating, animal bites, sailing, hiking on or near volcanoes, food poisoning, fishing, surfing, and windsurfing. I participate in these activities of my own free will, recognize that the element of risk is a necessary part of the enjoyment of this trip, and I hold Serendipity Adventures, Inc. and Serendipity Costa Rica, S.A. harmless for my safety beyond normal due care. I recognize that Serendipity's guides and/or pilots may decline to take me on any activity if in their opinion my participation puts at risk myself or any other person, including cancellation because I have not worn clothing or footwear appropriate to the activity. I recognize that Serendipity will not refund for cancelled activities if I have any condition not revealed before confirming the trip with Serendipity, including use of drugs or alcohol.

Signed	_____	Dated	_____
Signed	_____	Dated	_____
Signed	_____	Dated	_____
Signed	_____	Dated	_____
Guardian Signature	_____	Dated	_____

(If any of above under the age of 21, please also have legal guardian sign)

Rev.18, 9/5/2009



RESERVATION:

Please: Copy this form for each person: NAME: _____

Age: _____ **Sex:** _____ **Height:** _____ **Weight** _____ **Pants Size** _____ **Shirt Size** _____ **Shoe Size** _____
 (We need the above info to size equipment-life jackets, harnesses, saddles, etc.)

With whom will you share your room? _____ Need Smoker's room? _____
 Are you taking **medications** which we should know about? (Insulin, heart medicines, antibiotics, etc.) _____

Do you have any **allergies** which could cause you problems during the trip? (bee stings, horses, pollen, shellfish, etc.) _____

Do you wear glasses? Contacts? Do you have disposable contacts? For the canyoning and whitewater we recommend disposable contacts, and at least an extra pair along with you in case one goes out. For hard-frame glasses, be sure to bring an extra pair in case the ones you are wearing get lost. Hard-frame glasses WILL get wet, often lost, and always get mineral stains that are hard to clean off. Bring non-sunglass prescriptions with you; in the canyons the shadows get deep

Do you have any **physical limitations** that could limit your horseback riding, hiking (without a pack on your back), swimming, flying in the balloon (altitude is usually under 7,000 MSL), climbing (arm or hand injury)? Normally any physical limitation can be accommodated, if we know about it in advance. _____

Are there any **foods/drinks** which you must avoid (like meat, alcohol, shellfish, dairy, or pork)? _____

What are your **preferred beverages** (red/white wine? diet Coke? Lite beer, pina colada, etc.) - important for the times you are trapped with Serendipity and no access to restaurants (like when camping, etc.) _____

Are there any foods which you don't like, but could eat in a pinch: _____

Willing to reveal your birth date? Here? Now? _____

Tell us a little about your sense of humor. _____

Do you have special skills which we should know about (like passably fluent Spanish, medical degree, wilderness first aid competent, rally car driver, excellent map reader, bareback rider, forestry botanist, herbal medicine expert, ropes course whiz, airplane pilot, orienteerist, geologist, volcanologist) _____

What type of music player will you bring for use in the car (iPod, MP3, CD's, tape, etc.) _____

Any (more) questions for us? _____



USEFUL TIPS FROM SERENDIPITY - updated September 5, 2009

NOTICE FROM HOMELAND SECURITY: As of January 1, 2008, travelers may no longer pack spare lithium batteries of any kind in checked baggage. Passengers wishing to carry spare lithium batteries for devices such as laptops, cell phones and cameras are now required to pack them in their carry-on baggage with the terminals covered/insulated. Travelers may check bags that contain batteries, as long as they are installed in electronic devices. Please see the following web site for tips: <http://safetravel.dot.gov/tips.html>*

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT TO BRING

CLOTHING, GENERAL: Most of Costa Rica is truly only moderately tropical. Light weight clothing is advised, but long sleeves offer better protection from the sun and, when off the beaten path, against insects and foliage (sugar cane leaves are similar in abrasiveness to corn leaves). You'll need some light clothing but also one jacket, sweatshirt or lightest weight Polar fleece (best because it dries quickly) for warmth. A lot of Costa Rica is at high altitude (4000 - 7000 ft.), and it can get into the low 50's after dark -- use layers for warmth. Strong **shoes** that can get wet and dry quickly are mandatory (strong tennis shoes/cross-trainers advised). Since air drying may be nearly impossible between activities, bring at least 2 pair. Waterproof hiking boots never dry, but for long hikes good boots are essential (hair dryers also dry shoes). Generally, strong tennis shoes are great for serious treks. Horseback and rafting definitely need "wetable" shoes.

RAIN WEAR: Generally up to about 4,000 ft. altitude when you are outside and active the raincoats act only to hold the sweat inside. When it does rain, it is usually very warm, and serves well to wash away the sweat and mud you've accumulated today. A **poncho** is more versatile, because you can also sit on it, roll up wet clothes in it, and it also gives more breathing room to your arms, etc. However, the high altitude CLOUD FOREST areas get down to about 40°F, and if your itinerary includes biking from the cloud forest, BRING A RAIN/WIND pullover and some fleece jacket and biking gloves and long biking pants... dress in layers.

EVENING CLOTHES- light casual clothing and at least a long sleeve lightweight shirt for warmth. Meals, even at the fanciest hotels, are very informal, so just be comfortable. It does get pretty cool in the evenings (middle 60's) in the mountain areas, so don't get caught with nothing to keep you warm. Long sleeve collared shirts for men in San José restaurants advisable.

DON'T FORGET a wide-brim hat (necks and ears get really burned!), and, if you wear glasses or sunglasses, a strap to keep them in place as well as a backup pair, your personal medications, a rain poncho strong walking shoes, sandals, shorts, short-sleeve shirts, sun block, insect repellent (DEET for skin, Permethrin for clothing), a few bandages & antibiotic cream, anti-itch cream (like Cortaid), small flashlight, a (baseball) cap or hat. If you wear contacts, bring an extra pair of disposable type. For driving, bring your favorite CD's or iPod or MP3 Player and an external connector (repeat through radio signal) for the car's radio system. You might consider a pocket knife, a small "fanny pack", a small flashlight.

CAMERA: If you want to bring a camera on the raft, investigate the underwater/waterproof bags available from good camera shops, or the cheap disposable waterproof cameras. No matter how fancy the waterproof bag is for a camera, everything that can be "opened" during the raft trip will get WET. Even on non-rafting days, the humidity can condense on lenses and interiors of cameras, so airtight camera cases need desiccants. Electricity is the same as for the USA (110 Volt) but many hotels have only with 2-prong (polarized style OK) outlets.

RAFTING/KAYAKING/CANYONING: For the river you need clothing that can get really wet, plus footwear that has rubber or cork soles. **(No open toe shoes, coral-walking scuba shoes, Velcro-closed shoes or TEVA-style shoes with open toes.** Tennis shoes ARE FINE). No blue jeans or heavy pants/sweatshirts on the rafts. If long pants, be sure they are lightweight, designed for river wear, and dry quickly. You need SUN BLOCK! We have helmets on river trips (mandatory use in canyons and on the white water rivers). If you wear glasses, better to NOT bring the sun glass prescription pair but rather the clear ones (or auto-adjust variety). Glasses, however, get terrible water spots, so treat your lenses with anti-spotting solution (like Rainex) before the trip. **CANYONING:** it gets cold in the water! Bring synthetic long underwear (Capiline, for example). We provide paddle (warmth) jackets but sometimes "cold" people bring "shortie" wetsuits.



When you are on the river we'll provide a dry bag that can carry everything you need during the trip (including a spare pair of glasses). All your other luggage, etc. will be in the support vehicle, and guarded well, so you can leave valuables (passport, money, etc.) in the car without concern.

HORSEBACK, BIKING, CLIMBING, CAMPING, HIKING: Serendipity provides the necessary equipment for these sports, including ropes, harnesses, helmets, carabiners, etc. (climbing), bikes, water bottles, (biking), rain slicks (horseback). Clothing is a matter of personal preference, but remember it can be very hot in the sun, wet in the rain, and there are always opportunities for bugs to get to bare skin. Generally **strong tennis shoes** are preferred except for serious hiking. Long sleeve lightweight light color shirts, long pants on horseback, and shoes that can get soaked, as well as sun protecting hat for face and neck. For mountain biking, please bring **biking gloves, padded biking shorts, your favorite helmet** (we provide bike helmets, but if you are on a long ride, then your own comfortable helmet is probably worth bringing down). If "volcano" or "cloud forest" is in the bike description, also bring a lightweight polar fleece jacket because of altitude and likelihood of rain.

BALLOONING: Balloon flights are at sunrise, and can be chilly. There is NO APPRECIABLE TEMPERATURE CHANGE AS YOU GAIN ALTITUDE. Lightweight, light colored clothing is advised, but long sleeves offer better protection from the sun and, when off the beaten path, against insects and foliage (sugar cane leaves are similar in abrasiveness to corn leaves). Baseball cap, sun glasses, strong shoes (tennis shoes are sufficient) that offer full foot protection are mandatory; socks are strongly recommended (because of insects).

BUGS and OTHER VARMINTS: There are always insects and small animals around you while traveling in Costa Rica -- sometimes in your own bedroom, even at the best hotels, definitely in ecolodges and beach hotels. Ants, geckos, small lizards, sometimes large and impressive beetles enter rooms, vehicles, restaurants. Avoid taking any foodstuff into your room, (even an open roll of TUMS will attract ants) and be happy when you see small lizards and geckos (they eat mosquitoes). You can find clothing treated with Permethrin, or buy a can and spray on your clothing before coming to Costa Rica (we use Sawyer Duranon Permethrin Insect Repellent -- available at www.cabelas.com); insect repellent in bottles (BEN's 100% DEET, 1.25 ounce - get the drop bottle, not spray pump -- more convenient -- at www.cabelas.com), rather than compressed gas sprays (think AIRLINE RESTRICTIONS), allow "spot treatment" of exposed skin rather than spraying the environment.

CONVERTING MONEY: Bring only U.S. dollars in cash and in traveler's checks. Any other currency must be exchanged only at the central bank in San José, and is a long process (read: half a day!). The exchange rate in the airports in the U.S. is something like \$1 = 470 colones; in San José the exchange (September, 2009) is \$1 = 570+ colones and changing daily. Your Serendipity guide will help you exchange cash. The exchange rate for **travelers checks** is lower, and must be exchanged in banks (read: **2 hours in bank line!**). If we're meeting your flight we'll help with the exchange. NOTE: In December, 2007 the Costa Rica government DEVALUED the U.S. dollar by 10% on a single day, which means costs rose by 10% when paying in dollars. Future sudden currency adjustments are likely, so exchange rate information mentioned above may be obsolete tomorrow.

Credit cards work well in the Central Valley and the more established communities where there are phone lines for authorization. You may pay a premium to use the card. Tourist hotels take credit cards, but not to confirm reservations (under Costa Rica law, all credit card payments MUST have a physical credit card imprint and a signature. Phoned confirmations are not binding on you and therefore hotels, etc. will not guarantee hotel rooms on credit card numbers. Some hotels accept the cards on the phone, but in the end many hotels will sell a confirmed room to people with "real" money who show up). VISA is the most accepted credit card in Costa Rica, MasterCard is also widely accepted and is growing in popularity. ATM cards from your local bank will work in a few teller machines in the country.

PASSPORTS: Mandatory for all persons, regardless of age. Passport **cannot expire within 1 month** of arrival date. Check visa requirements by nationality on Costa Rica government website:
<http://www.costarica-embassy.org/consular/visa/country-selection.htm>.

LUGGAGE: NEW URGENT REQUIREMENT: Carry a photocopy of your passport! Serendipity can't get into the airline desk to help with LOST LUGGAGE. To get lost luggage, you must have a PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR PASSPORT to leave with the desk clerk, and an ADDRESS for the airline to deliver your luggage to. So give them the NAME of the hotel



where you will be the first night, the copy of your passport, and the claim number on your baggage check (be sure to write down the claim number for your records, too). Sorry we won't be able to help you in this ordeal, but U.S. Homeland Security rules prohibit access to luggage areas, even in foreign countries.

HOW TO PACK: If you can possibly do it, use only carry-on luggage (liquids and toothpaste have 3 ounce limits per item, packed in a ziplock bag, but otherwise you are allowed 40 pounds in the carry-on plus a purse or camera bag or computer, etc.). Lost luggage is a common problem when you are making connecting flights, and reporting lost luggage takes half a day. We strongly recommend that you use soft-sided duffel bag style luggage (because it is easier to carry/stuff into the vehicle, turn into a pillow or armrest, and to keep dry under roof rack covers) and **avoid hard-sided cases.**

ARRIVAL: WHAT TO DECLARE: Customs forms are usually distributed on the airplane. The form asks you to declare everything COMMERCIAL you are bringing into the country. If you have any food (including fruits, vegetables, sausages, etc.) or substances which can be sniffed by dogs, you will be stopped.

When you get off the plane you will first be shuffled through the immigration area, where they will check your passport. Once through passport control go downstairs to pick up your luggage (there are free metal carts there to move your stuff about in the small baggage area), and then luggage goes through an X-ray machine (they are looking for fresh fruits/meats etc.). If you HAVE A U.S., CANADIAN or EUROPEAN PASSPORT they waive you past. Even if you speak fluent Spanish, speak only English or some other language to make it clear you are not a resident. If an agent asks to inspect your bags, allow him to do so, but continue to "not understand" his Spanish. If you have things we've asked you to take down, don't volunteer these during inspection; they are "personal goods" because the guides will be using them during your trip.

AFTER CLEARING CUSTOMS: The luggage carts stop at the exterior door. If heavy, you'll need a porter which has to be hired from the people inside the building... Serendipity can't grab stuff until outside the "gauntlet".

MEETING SERENDIPITY: If your itinerary say the **HOTEL** will meet you, look for the hotel's sign when you leave the terminal.

If your itinerary from us tells you your **SERENDIPITY GUIDE** will meet you, here's what you do. Once you are outdoors, TURN RIGHT and walk towards the pay phone mounted on the terminal building, about 100 feet from the door. Sometimes we get really organized and have a yellow raft paddle with Serendipity's name on it; sometimes we have your name on it. Most important -- don't believe the taxi drivers that "your guide won't show up and you're supposed to go with me".

If you don't identify Serendipity's guide, then you can dial **800-22-55-911** (don't put a "1" in front of this toll-free number!!!) and Serendipity will answer, and connect you with your guide. In many cases you will have been emailed your guide's name and their cellular phone number. Truthfully, guides have missed connections only twice in the past five years, resulting in funny stories and no lost time.

Once we've got you, you're done with the hard stuff. The rest is all easy - like climbing mountains, twisting down rivers, startling a few toucans from their nests, etc.

MEDICINES and INOCULATIONS: Be sure to have your TETANUS inoculation brought up to date – guaranteed you'll need this medication while in Costa Rica doing silly adventure stuff. While Hepatitis "A" and "B" are not currently present in Costa Rica, there have been recent outbreaks in the USA -- Detroit, Miami, New Orleans, and other cities. Worldwide, Hepatitis is a serious disease, affecting millions. There are now vaccines for both these diseases, and we encourage everyone to get the inoculations, and will be really handy someday when you venture to Mardi Gras or the Auto Show. Some rivers in Costa Rica have had Hepatitis show up in analysis, but none of the Caribbean slope white water rivers (Pacuare, Sarapiquí, Peñas Blancas, Pejibaye) have ever tested "positive" to Hepatitis.

Costa Rica has been free of dangerous parasite diseases (malaria, yellow fever, typhoid) for a long time. In 1996 malaria reappeared in the two port cities (Puntarenas and Limon), was contained to those areas and eradicated quickly (using DDT). Dengue (mosquito-carried) has also appeared, again in the poor neighborhoods. For your information, none of the



Serendipity guides use any preventative medication for malaria or any other tropical diseases. Insect repellent is the best deterrent, and we recommend using the roll-on type whenever out for evenings.

Parasitic infections are rare in Costa Rica, and drinking water quality in Costa Rica is excellent. Bottled water is readily available, however, and we keep containers in the vehicle with us. In all the areas we travel it is completely safe to drink the water straight from the tap, unless the hotel specifically directs you to drink bottled water. Bottled water may help eliminate the effects of a different mineral content (our water may affect your intestines; American chlorine-treated water certainly affects ours when we go to the USA!!)

SOME STRANGE DIFFERENCES IN THE WAY THE THIRD WORLD WORKS. And Costa Rica is still economically in the Third World (the per capita GDP of Costa Rica is only 5% of the USA). This results in a few deprivations we Americans take for granted. These include:

COSTA RICA ROADS: pretty bad in many places, but improved significantly in the last 2 years. Costa Rica has no military need to keep roads free of potholes, or to make the roads wide enough for two vehicles to pass. In many instances the local population is not in a particularly big hurry to walk their horses to town. So the roads can be atrocious. **By far the most dangerous activity of Serendipity is driving on the main roads of the country**, especially after dark. With no white outer edge lines, no center yellow lines, no reflecting cat eyes on curves, no guard rails, a LARGE selection of (unmarked) one-lane bridges with no guard rails, lots of trucks going 10 miles an hour with no taillights, and pedestrians who believe that, if they can see your headlights, certainly you can see them in the middle of the road, and the crowning glory, dense, tropical fog. It is a challenge. Did we also mention, no direction signs or route numbers? Serendipity guides do almost anything to avoid driving at night, but sometimes it is unavoidable (there's only 12 hours of daylight year round, so sometimes the driving gets pushed into the foggy night...) -- only near the volcano do we drive after dark, because we know the roads (which are good) and there is rarely fog.

To point out something that straight numbers, especially really big numbers, only hide: In 1999 Citibank, the credit card company, paid computer programmers more to fix the Year 2000 computer bug than the whole country of Costa Rica used to operate its national government, including its health care, education, retirement, and ROAD BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE. Does this give you an idea of what it means to be in the Third World? **Costa Rican ROAD MAPS** were written for the gullible. Especially the Board of Tourism's "official" map of Costa Rica!

MAKING PHONE CALLS: As in: finding a phone somewhere. Costa Rica's rural phone system is quite good by neighboring country standards. In an emergency family and friends should call the Serendipity office and ask us to contact your group. Serendipity guides also carry cell phones, which have spotty coverage outside San José. Guides also call the office each day during a trip, to check for messages.

HOT WATER SHOWERS IN COSTA RICA: Even in truly elegant hotels you are likely to find a unique Costa Rican electrical shower system. Hot water showers are often created with electrical wiring connected to an "on demand" showerhead water heater. Usually only one control handle delivers water; the second, if even present, does not deliver water at all. Here's the secret: the more forcefully you turn on the water, THE COOLER THE WATER TEMPERATURE (the theory is there's a constant amount of heat and you regulate temperature by the flow of water). Some showerheads have switches, which activate lower or higher voltage settings. If you are trying to get a HOT shower, turn down the water flow, and try different settings on the showerhead (also note the effects this adjustment makes on the lights in the room).

SERENDIPITY'S VEHICLES: We own and lovingly maintain almost "classic" Toyota LandCruisers (1994-1999). You'll quickly appreciate the luxury these big burly cars -- especially strong transmissions and huge tires that absorb impact in our even huge potholes.

THE GOOD NEWS: What Costa Ricans lack in wealth, they more than make up for in warmth. You may think they are poor; but the Costa Rican country folk know they are surrounded by a caring community that always joins in to support those who need help. The Costa Ricans always extend this familial acceptance to even gringos, and this, believe us, is the greatest treasure of Costa Rica -- a genuinely free, energetic and graciously open people. While you are with us (and outside San José -- cities, yuk!) take a good look at the Costa Rican people -- full faced, open smiles, at the sparkling cleanliness of their clothes and their small houses, at their carefully maintained vibrant gardens. Look straight in their faces and you'll see the pride that the Costa Ricans take in living life well.



SAMPLE PACKING LIST

NOTE: Remember, **PACK LIGHTLY** and according to the activities you will be enjoying. This list covers lots of activities, possibly more than you'll be doing on your trip.

Clothes:

- 3 or 4 T-shirts (cotton or of some quick drying fabric)
- 2 or 3 Shorts (men can include swim trunks here)
- 1 pair of light weight long pants for keeping out the sun, bugs, and foliage, and/or
- 1 pair of heavier weight pants for horseback riding or cooler evenings
- 1 long sleeved lightweight shirt for sun, bugs and foliage
- 1 fleece or sweatshirt for cool evenings (you'll need it for the plane, too)
- 1 or 2 bathing suits (2 if you head to the beach)
- 1 windbreaker (for high altitude mountain biking) or waterproof poncho

Shoes:

- 1 pair of sneakers or sturdy shoe for getting wet and muddy - **CLOSED TOES!**. No TEVAS or Velcro closure shoes! -- Velcro doesn't hold when it gets wet.
- 1 pair of sneakers or closed shoe for staying dry
- 1 pair of sandals or comfortable shoe for staying dry and nice (evenings)

Toiletries:

- Personal Medications! Sunblock! Insect repellent!
- Small first aid kit : band-aids, after bite lotion/cream, after sun lotion, pain killer of your choice
- Glasses and back up pair & strap to hold them to your head, and/or Contacts, fluids and a spare set of lenses
- Hat with a wide brim or a baseball hat to keep off the sun, you'll **NEED** this.
- 1 small flashlight

EMERGENCIES: If for any reason you need us, call us! Our phone in Costa Rica is **2558-1000** Monday-Friday 8:30-5:00. We also have TOLL FREE within Costa Rica: dial 800-CALL911 (800-22-55-911) (**DON'T PUT 1** or 0 in front of 800!!!). We also have a 24-hour a day emergency line: 2558-1020. If it is after hours and the person answering speaks only Spanish, just say "Emergency" and he will connect you with one of us English-speakers, or you can call back in 15 minutes and he'll have one of us there next to the phone or ready to connect 3-way.

We hope you enjoy Serendipity Adventures as much as we enjoy putting it all together for you.