

# Preparation Tips

**All you need to know before you go**

**Travel Insurance** - We recommend that you purchase travel insurance for theft, trip cancellation, and emergency medical attention. Insurance can be obtained through Travel Insurance Services, 800-937-1387 or [www.travelinsure.com](http://www.travelinsure.com).

**Transportation Security Restrictions and Prohibitions** - For information regarding international flight security, visit: <http://www.tsa.gov> for USA travelers; visit <http://www.catsa.gc.ca> for Canadian travelers. If traveling from outside the USA/Canada, please request further information. Your airline(s) will clearly state rules on luggage weight and size requirements.

**Passports** - Citizens of the United States, Canada and most European countries are not required to have a visa to visit Costa Rica. However, they must have a current valid passport and a return ticket to exit Costa Rica within 90 days (either to return to your country or to go to another country). Please also carry two photocopies of your passport for your own security.

**Converting Money** - US Dollars (USD) in cash are widely accepted throughout Costa Rica. It is better to bring small bills (\$20 bill maximum). On arrival, it is quite simple to exchange to CRC, whether at the airport, at hotels, in tourist areas, or at the grocery store.

**Credit Cards** - Mastercard and Visa are widely accepted throughout Costa Rica, especially in cities and tourist areas. Please check with your credit card company to determine the international transaction fees to avoid a lot of charges. AMEX is not widely accepted throughout Costa Rica. ATM machines are widely available as well.



*Each traveler needs a valid passport and two photocopies*



*Costa Rican Colones (CRC) is the local currency, but USD is accepted*



*Mastercard and Visa can be used to pay in cities and tourist areas*

**Traveler's Checks** - Traveler's checks are no longer common and have become obsolete.

**Tipping** - If you have received good service, then a tip is very much appreciated but not expected. We have included a guide below:

**RESTAURANTS** - All Costa Rican restaurants will automatically add a 10% gratuity to your bill before it's given to you, in addition to the 13 percent tax. In Costa Rican eateries, tipping is optional, though it's polite to offer an additional sum if you feel your server exceeded your expectations.

**HOTELS** - If you're staying at a high-end resort, it's customary to offer a tip of around \$1 per bag. Similarly, many people leave the housekeeper a tip of around \$2 per day for the duration of their stay. If you have a few drinks at the hotel bar, it's generally considered good manners to tip around \$1 per drink.

**TRANSPORTATION** - If you're taking a cab a short distance, a large tip isn't really necessary, but rounding the fare up to the nearest dollar is usually the norm. For longer cab rides, a tip of between \$1 and \$5 is sufficient, but if you're going a really long way, giving a little extra might be a good idea. Tipping tour bus drivers will cost you a bit more. For an all-day tour, a tip of around \$10 is appropriate, but again, is by no means expected.

**TOUR GUIDES** - When it comes to the tour guides themselves, however, a tip of between \$5 and \$15 per person is considered polite, depending on how many people are in your tour group.

**Inoculations** - In Costa Rica, there currently are minimal threats of tropical diseases such as Malaria, Typhoid, and Yellow fever. We recommend that your Hepatitis A and B vaccinations are up to date. Many foreign authorities warn of high risk, but these advisories are conservative and intended for ultra risk-averse travelers.

**Laundry** - Most hotels offer laundry service, yet at a highly inflated price. It is available if absolutely necessary. For this reason, it is critical that you rely on a good set of quick dry clothes you can wash by hand (if needed) and reuse.



*Check if your Hepatitis A & B vaccinations are up to date*



*Bring a good supply of prescription and over-the-counter meds*



*Soft-sided luggage, such as a duffel bag, is highly recommended*



*If your luggage doesn't arrive, don't panic! Head to the declaration desk*

**Smoking:** According to law #9028, smoking is prohibited in hotel rooms and any public areas. Some hotels allow guests to smoke in designated areas away from other guests.

**Medication** - If you use any type of over-the-counter or prescription meds regularly, including aspirin or similar, asthma spray, and/or medication for car sickness, we recommend you bring a supply with you. Drugstores are common in Costa Rica, but we cannot guarantee your preferred brand is available here.

**Electronics** - Costa Rican outlets are 110 volt, the same as the US/Canada. However, many outlets only support the two-prongs (non-grounding receptacle) and not the three-pronged grounded outlet. An AC ground lifter (A.K.A “cheater plug”) could come in handy.

**Cameras** - The opportunities for photography are extraordinary – cameras are welcomed and encouraged. Cell phone cameras and “point & shoot” models are easiest to manage (preferably water/shockproof – see Olympus model). SLR and video cameras require special protection and care including padded camera bags or water/shockproof boxes (see Pelican Box).

**Smart Phones and WiFi** - Your international roaming capabilities must be verified with your cell phone provider – not all services are covered in Costa Rica. SIM cards are available locally, but you still must verify if your phone is unlocked. Another option is to purchase a pay-as-you-go plan that includes a basic cell phone (cost: \$20 - \$40). WiFi connectivity is common in most hotels (3-5 star) although the quality/stability of connection is often unstable. Some hotels only offer WiFi in common areas and not in the rooms. Almost all hotels do offer computers with internet connection for guest use, and internet cafés are common throughout Costa Rica.

**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. Ants, geckos, small lizards, and beetles enter rooms, vehicles, and restaurants. Do not take any food into your room and be mindful of where you step.



*A 'cheater plug' will come in handy during your trip*



*Waterproof 'point & shoot' cameras are the most practical option*



*Waterproof/Shockproof box made by PELICAN*



*Wildlife in Costa Rica is best kept outside your hotel room*



**Tablets, iPods & Laptops** - Our advice is simple: Bring ONE DEVICE ONLY and leave the rest at home – the smaller and lighter your choice, the easier to manage.

**Luggage** - Soft-sided luggage is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. All vehicles include a rooftop cargo box (Thule) that can stow a reasonable amount of luggage. If your luggage is lost upon arrival to Costa Rica, go to the lost luggage declaration desk. You must give them a photocopy of your passport, the address of your first night's hotel, and the claim number on your baggage check stub (write down your baggage check stub for your records too). We will not be permitted to enter the airport to assist you in this process.

**Airport Pick-Up** - A few days prior to your departure, you can expect an important message from Serendipity titled "LAST MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS". This will contain specific details that will help you prepare for your arrival in Costa Rica including airport instructions, guide name/contact info, and friendly reminders of important documentation.

**Contacting Serendipity Adventures** - For travelers that need to be accessible to business or family back home, please provide them with our international contact information.

#### MONDAY - FRIDAY 8 AM to 4:30 PM

Costa Rica time (-6 UTC)

From USA/Canada (toll-free): 888-226-5050 or 877-507-1358

Within Costa Rica: 2556-5852

All other countries: +506 2556-5852

#### AFTER HOURS AND ON WEEKENDS

(24/7 emergency number)

From USA/Canada: 011-506-8703-8743

Within Costa Rica: 8703-8743

All other countries: +506-8703-8743



*Come prepared with repellent*



*Keep an eye out for our 'Last Minute Instructions'*

## **Serendipity de Costa Rica S.A.**

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