

GP COSTA RICA 2016: Travel Guide



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1. Useful information upon arrival

Costa Rica doesn't require visa for most of the nationalities. * Some South and Central American countries do require visa, you can check those migratory requirements in the link below. (<http://www.migracion.go.cr/extranjeros/visas.html>)

As most of the airports, upon arriving you'll go through migratory services, then baggage claim and finally customs (All the forms you'll need to fill are usually given to you during the flight, but you can ask for them to the flight crew or any officer inside the airport. Pro tip: bring a pen, in all the times I've been there I haven't seen a single spare one and other passengers are usually in a hurry, so they won't lend you theirs).

Customs restrictions are similar to most countries. Avoid bringing fresh vegetables, raw meat or cheese. If you are not a citizen of Costa Rica, they will ask for a proof of onward travel (ie. a ticket leaving the country), as it is a requirement by law to have purchased before you enter as a tourist.

Inside the airport you'll find some service booths. As in most places, avoid them, as they are usually overpriced.

After going through customs you'll exit a pair of doors at the end of the hall, on the left and you'll be outside of the airport, where all the people wait for their relatives and cab drivers try to offer you more overpriced services.

Most of the stores and services can be paid in either Dollars (USD) or Colones (CRC), but be mindful of the exchange rate, as some people will try to give you less. Right now the rate is 543 CRC to 1 USD and hopefully it will be the same in June.

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2. Airports and getting to the city

Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO)

This is Costa Rica's main airport. It's located 14.5km from the venue and 17.3 from San Jose downtown (the airport is located in Alajuela, despite being SJO as it was relocated from San Jose several years ago).



TAXIS

You can find two types of taxis at the airport. The first ones are the orange taxis. These taxis are the airport's contractor only taxis, even though they are more expensive, many travelers prefer them. You can make a booking with them before coming to Costa Rica, or at a booth inside the terminal. For more information, please go to <http://www.taxiaeropuerto.com/index.php?lang=en>



The other type of taxi is the red ones. These are Costa Rica's public taxis, and in general will be cheaper than the orange ones. Currently it costs ₡630 for the first kilometer, and ₡600 for each additional kilometer thereafter (approx \$9000 or \$18 to the tournament venue).



BUSES

The route, ALAJUELA – SAN JOSE – POR PISTA stops in front of the airport (upon exiting the airport terminal, follow the curb out onto the main street where you can see the bus stops in front of the parking lots). These buses are red and white and usually they have written TUASA on their side. Currently it costs ₡565 one way, The bus stops directly in front of the airport, but it does so in both directions, to and from San Jose. Make sure to board the correct direction



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towards San Jose (there will be an assistant yelling out the destination of the bus at the stop, or if not, ask the bus driver if they are headed to San Jose). If you are taking this option to the tournament venue, you want to get off at the bus stop across the street from the Best Western Hotel Irazu/Denny's restaurant, and cross the road under the bridge. It will then be a 800 meter walk East until you get to the bottom side of the Hotel San Jose (google map route: <https://goo.gl/maps/s4qttyrA7TQ2>) NOT RECOMMENDED.

OTHER

Uber is currently operating on the country. Their service has been of high quality, however, there has been a lot of conflict between the public taxis and them. If you decide to use them, just one tip, always seat someone in the front seat, and if asked by a third party, say it's a friend picking you up.



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3. Moving around in the city

BUSES

San José is a small city and has buses to almost any place in Costa Rica. Depending where you want to go, the cost will vary from under \$1 for most intercity destinations GAM (Great Metropolitan Area or Gran Area Metropolitana in Spanish) to upwards of \$5 for the beaches and far flung areas. If you want to go to other places like beaches, the price will be higher, for example, going to some beaches in Guanacaste cost around \$10. San José is full of bus stops and all of the buses must be paid in colones with cash, so carry some colones with you. If you get lost, look for a police officer.

TAXIS

As mentioned before, red cabs are Costa Rica's official public taxis. The current fee is ₡630 for the first kilometer and ₡600 for any additional kilometers thereafter.

Walking

Walking in San José lets you discover many great places, however, as any other city; there are places more dangerous than others. If you want to go for a walk, we advise you to carry a small quantity of cash and ask the locals about the dangerous areas. In general most of the museums and tourist spots tend to be very clean and safe, and the only worrisome areas are the markets or zones close to the bus stops that service the outlying slums. The pedestrian streets, main avenue and the boulevards leading to the public parks are all safe and in general you should only avoid the southernmost side of the city.

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4. Venue & Judge Hostel information

Hotel Barcelo San Jose Palacio

This is going to be the venue and judge hotel for the GP.

The venue is located near the “Autopista General Cañas”, just a few miles from the downtown. Any cab could get you there without any trouble.

Prices go from \$79 dollars per night if you want to stay here for more days, but ask your judge manager in case he could get you a better deal.



Also the venue has shuttle services from and to the airport. Please contact the Hotel directly for more information and schedules.

Web Page:

https://www.barcelo.com/barcelohotels/es_es/hoteles/costa-rica/san-jose-de-costa-rica/hotel-barcelo-san-jose-palacio/descripcion-general.aspx

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5. Hotels and hostels

Since the venue is not in downtown, most of the other Hostels and hotels are a little bit far. So, in case you choose any other place to stay please ask a local for the better route to get to the gp.

Costa Rica Backpackers San Jose

Located in downtown near the bus stations and most places of interest.

\$21 per night

Web Page: <http://www.costaricabackpackers.com/>

Aldea Hostel

Also located in downtown

\$15 per night

Web Page: <http://www.aldeahostelcostarica.com/>

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6. Tourist spots

Costa Rica famous for it's nature. Counting with more than 25 national parks and other reservations, Costa Rica is an example of wild conservation. Many of this parks and zones are near San José. Here are some recommendations we have for you:

Irazu Volcano National Park

Located in the province of Cartago, this is one of the most iconic volcanoes Costa Rica has. Depending on the route you take, it is located at 55 km from the venue. Here, you can walk inside one of it's 3 craters. At the highest point of it, you will be able to see both, the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans. Beware, it might be cold.



Poas Volcano National Park

Located at the province of Alajuela, this volcano has one of the biggest craters in the world. It is covered with a lot of vegetation and you can even see sloths and other wild animals. Depending on the route you take, it is located 46km from the venue. Here you can visit the lagoon which used to be another of the volcano's craters long ago, now it is covered in vegetation. Beware, it might be cold. The zone near the volcano is a great place for buying strawberries and "palm" cheese.



Braulio Carrillo National Park

This one of the most extensive parks there is on the country. It is divided in two sectors, the main sector and the Barva Volcano sector. One road (Route 32) goes through the main sector. On the road you are able to see small waterfalls. Here you can have a ride on a cable car



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and check what the park has to offer. This sector is only 26 km from the venue.

The other sector includes the Barva Volcano. Even though this sector is less developed for tourism, it contains high levels of wild life and is usually less cloudy than the main sector. It also counts with a lagoon. Depending on the route you take, it is only 28km from the venue. Beware, it might get rainy.

Manuel Antonio National Park.

Located in the province of Punta Arenas on Quepos, it is a small National Park located on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. It is the destination of as many as 150,000 visitors annually and well known for its beautiful beaches and hiking trails. In 2011, Manuel Antonio was listed by Forbes among the world's 12 most beautiful national parks. It is located 170km from the venue.



Arenal Volcano National Park

Located on the province of Alajuela, on the sector of La Fortuna, San Carlos. It is another of the most iconic volcanoes in Costa Rica. During many years it remained active; however it is currently falling to sleep. The area of La Fortuna is very tourist friendly and you can find many places that offer natural hot springs. Also, you can visit the Arenal's artificial lake, created to provide power to the Arenal Dam. This is the largest lake on the country.



Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

Located on the province of Punta Arenas, it has an extremely high biodiversity, consisting of over 2,500 plant species (including the most orchid species in a single place), 100 species of mammals, 400 bird species, 120 reptilian and amphibian species, and thousands of



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insects, has drawn scientists and tourists since. This place is famous for their “sky bridges”, allowing its visitors to walk on the top of many trees.

Barra Honda National Park

Located on the province of Guanacaste, this national park consists of many underground caves you can visit. This is one of the many Costa Rica’s faces that not many people know.



Chirripo National Park

If you aren’t adventurous enough to go underground, maybe you would like to go higher. This national park is the highest point Costa Rica can offer you. However, keep in mind that the temperature can get really low and you need to be in good shape in order to accept this challenge.



Apart of all the national parks, Costa Rica offers a lot of ecotourism activities, many of them near the national parks. Canopy, bungee, rafting, these are just some the activities you can do on Costa Rica.

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7. Recommendations to visit

National Theater

One of the most iconic buildings on the capital, the National Theater is a magnificent place to visit. It has a wonderful architecture. The theater has tourist guides that will be more than glad to show it to you. Also it has the original painting of our ₡5 bill, considered the most beautiful and colorful bill on the world. It has a cafeteria which is a great place to rest a little bit and taste our national coffee.



Gold Museum

Located just next to the National Theater, the Gold Museum has the most complete collection of gold pieces created by our ancestors before the time of the colony.



Guayabo National Monument

This monument is all that remains from an ancient village created by Costa Rica's indigene. Discovered near the 1800, many excavations have occurred here in order to find Costa Rica's lost history. A very important detail about this place is that it has its own water system that is working up to today.



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8. Food and beverages

Costa Rica is full of places for eating, however there really aren't many places to go that are near the venue, that's why we invite you go outside and search for a great place. We will give you some recommendations:

Los Yoses/Barrio Dent

Los Yoses is a neighborhood in San José. Here you can find many bars and restaurants. Almost any kind of food can be found here. This used to be the upscale neighbourhood on the hill overlooking San Jose downtown which has now been engulfed by the city sprawl but which retains a great deal of its old houses transformed into restaurants and bars. Notable places include: Porton Rojo, Kalu, Hoxton Pub, Club Aleman, Asociación China, Ravi Gastropub, La Sospecha, Eastern Pub, Yoguis (traditional costa rican style diner).

Barrio la California/Cuesta de Moras

This is a dedicated pub/bar/tavern/nightclub zone. Here you can find from high class pubs to underground joints. Craic's Pub, La esquina, Rafa's, La Ventanita Meraki, Bar Bahamas/Area City, Calle 21 Caccios, Restaurante Wongs, Stereo Sushi (Awesome sunset view over the city, 9th floor).

La Casita del Humo (San Pedro)

Barbeque, pulled pork and happy hour.

Soda Tapia (La Sabana)

Traditional Costa Rican food, gallo pinto, sandwich de mano de piedra and coffee.

Other places in downtown where you can go shopping and get some food:

Plaza Carolina (San Pedro)

Plaza California (San Pedro)

Plaza Itskatzu (Escazu)

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Momentum Lindora (Santa Ana)

9. Useful tips

Sadly there isn't an accurate offline map/gps app that we know. But as long as you are online, we highly recommend using Waze (<https://www.waze.com/es-419>), you can virtually get to any part of the country with it. Also because it's a little complicated to ask for an address here in Costa Rica, if you have some spare time and an adventurous soul, try it.

Usually Us, Ticos, are great hosts to foreign people, always with a smile, willing to help and hoping you have a great time in our country. But as most places in the world (sadly) there's thievery and mugging, so try to avoid walking alone and people that behave "too friendly".

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10. Local Game Stores

AVALON GAME ARENA (GP'S TO)

SAN PEDRO

<https://www.facebook.com/Avalon-Game-Arena-93115409993/?fref=ts>

VORTEX GAME CENTER

SAN JOSE

<https://www.facebook.com/VortexGamingCR/?fref=ts>

Krypton Hobby Store

CORONADO

<https://www.facebook.com/kryptoncr/?fref=ts>

El Calabozo Game Center

ALAJUELA

<https://www.facebook.com/elcalabozogamecenter/?fref=ts>

Valhalla

SAN RAMÓN

<https://www.facebook.com/valhalla.sanramon?fref=ts>

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11. Currency exchange

The first place where you can change into local currency is at the baggage claim area but in general the rates you get here are very bad. The best way to change dollars into Costa Rican Colones is at any bank in the city. Traditional office hours are from 9 am to 5 pm, but several agencies in malls are open until 7 pm. Most commerce allows payment with a credit card, and in general given the tourist nature of our economy most businesses will take payment in Colones or Dollars (although they may apply an unfavorable exchange rate). There is also an ATM in baggage claim and one can normally (depending on your bank of origin) withdraw colones at the internal banking conversion rate plus the commission per transaction which tends to be less than using the money exchange services right next to it (based on my experience it costs ~3% for ATM compared to 10+% for exchange houses). Remember the official exchange rate at the moment is 543 CRC for each dollar, and hopefully by June it will remain the same.