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## A Week on Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast

The Caribbean coast of Costa Rica is totally different to the rest of the country. It's proximity to the Caribbean results in a unique culture packed full of colour, flavour and of course breathtaking wildlife.

We spent an action packed week exploring this slice of tropical paradise and it's safe to say were not short on things to do! Below is a recap of the seven days and our favourite experiences along



the way as we discovered this extraordinary part of the world.

### Day One:

We flew into San Jose's Juan Santamaria International, where we transferred downtown to the [Auroa Hotel](#) to sleep off the flight.

We woke the next morning for an early transfer to Sarapiquí - this is around an hours drive in a taxi. For ease we recommend booking one through the hotel - this might be slightly more expensive but ultimately saves the stress of haggling on the street! This journey will take you north, through San Jose and immediately into the stunning vistas of Costa Rica. For us, this is when the adventure really began, winding along the rainforest lined roads, past colourful little towns and through miles of vibrant green countryside. We could have stayed in that taxi taking in the sights all day, beats sitting at home watching TV!

## **Sarapiqui:**

Sarapiqui is a Canton in the province of Heredia and is one of Costa Rica's best kept secrets. If you like nature and/or adrenaline sports then you are going to love this beautiful corner of the country.

### **Experience: Rafting on the Sarapiqui River**

If i'm totally honest with you, I didn't know what to expect from this activity. My hesitancy was founded in the idea that this might be a bit of a tame way to spend the afternoon. I thought it might be a case of floating down a nice river, soaking up the sunshine and casually taking in the sights. I was wrong.

To kick things off we were driven 30 minutes up river to where we would begin. Once there, we were introduced to our guide who gave us a quick 15 minute introduction and overview of equipment, techniques and knowledge of the river's rapids. And without further ado we boarded our trusty raft and were off. Immediately it became apparent that this wasn't going to be a casual drift downstream as we encountered our first rapid and were soaked from head to toe - this was going to be fun!

We spent the next 2.5 hours (tiring stuff!) navigating the river's rapids. The section of river that we completed was home to class III and class IV rapids, these are good entry level rapids but are by no means boring and will test your strength, coordination and nerve as you are flung about the river.

Be prepared to get wet, really wet, in fact, be prepared to be soaked from head to toe, but that's all part of the fun. You will finish this experience with a big smile on your face and sense of accomplishment.

If you after an adventurous way to view the region's nature then this is for you.

*Note:* The afternoon was fuelled but a decent kick of adrenaline and is not for the faint hearted. That said it felt completely safe at all times with excellent guides, technical kit and a focus on safety throughout. If you are after a bit more excitement try to be seated at the front of the boat and you will be on the front line of the battle with the rapids. Equally if you are a little more nervous, try and get a seat at the back with the guide.

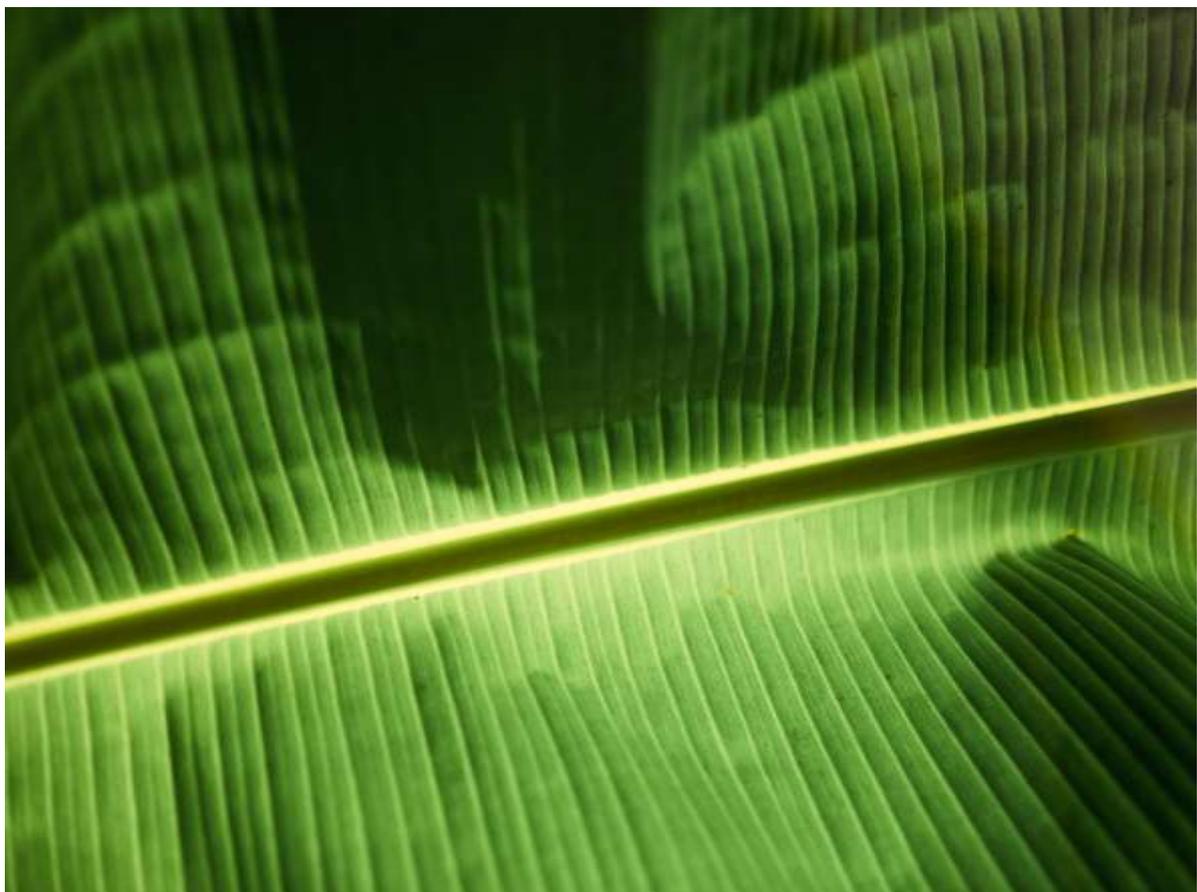
More info [here](#).

Stay:

La Quinta Lodge

This is a little slice of Costa Rican bliss, hidden away in a forest by a river. You are surrounded by nature and will be woken by Howler Monkeys, joined at breakfast by tropical birds and will meet the stunning Red eyed tree frog at night.

[Website](#)





## Day Two:

We woke early and made our way down to the river that ran below our balcony. As we reached the water to dip our toes in the sun began to stream through the jungle canopy as a thousand different animals, birds and insects began their morning routine. As starts to the day go, this was a good one.

A spot (metric tonne) of breakfast and we were on our way, a mile or so down the road to our first activity.

### **Experience: Surround yourself in the nature of Tirimbina**

Tirimbina is a non profit natural park with the sole aim of conserving the biodiversity of the Sarapiquí jungle. The park aims to educate visitors on the wonders of the region's natural ecosystem, inspiring you to be more self sufficient and harmonious with nature, and it's safe to say that that was exactly the effect it had on us!

The park protects 345 Hectares of beautiful biodiversity and is It is a wonderland of nature boasting an incredible array of natural species including; 43 species of amphibians, 29 of fish, 108 of mammals, 395 of birds, 1216 of birds, 54 of reptiles and a staggering 1403 species of butterflies. Walking around Tirimbina feels like you have stepped into the garden of Eden, a green jungle paradise in which you are surrounded by tropical wildlife.

We had a guided tour of the park, learning about the different species and how the Tirimbina team are protecting them for generations to come. The tour ended with us crossing the Sarapiquí river via a 264 metre suspension bridge.

More info [here](#).





## **Day Three:**

Time to leave the jungle of Sarapiquí behind and transfer to Tortuguero - A short but beautiful drive east and we arrived at La Pavona where we boarded a boat and headed along the intricate canal network towards Tortuguero. Although a necessary means of transportation the journey itself is an awesome experience, an hour of speeding through the backwaters, surrounded by thick jungle and all manner of wildlife - this is no ordinary boat ride.

Eventually we arrived at our destination, Tortuguero. A small village built on a spit of land between the canals and the Caribbean Sea, it is uniquely positioned and only accessible by boat. Arriving at our hotel's riverside decking came with a sense of achievement, after an hour of exploring the backwaters it felt like we had earned the right to step onto land!

### **Experience: Exploring Tortuguero Village**

Tortuguero is a lively little village with Afro-Caribbean roots, colourful buildings and no cars to disrupt the it's peaceful pace. A walking tour of the village is a must, we spent an afternoon wandering the streets, chatting to the locals and playing football with the kids. There is not a huge amount to do other than saunter the dirt tracks but that's the beauty of it, just relax and go with the flow. If you are after more action the village is perfectly positioned as a springboard for activities, from boat excursions to jungle tours, turtle watching to kayaking.

### **Stay Mawamba Lodge**

Mawamba Lodge is a tropical haven situated in the heartland of the rainforest. Upon arrival we were greeted with a fresh fruit juice and by a large Iguana basking in the sunshine and this set the

tone for our stay. Set in the jungle, on the banks of the backwaters, with the Caribbean sea a stones throw in the other direction we were surrounded by nature - sharing the space with tropical birds, monkeys and stunning views. The lodge boasts a large pool, spacious rooms and even a floating restaurant available to rent if you fancy a private dinner whilst floating down river!

I cannot complete this post without mentioning the food, my goodness the food! Every meal was an incredible buffet banquet of fresh local produce and cooking. My goodness did we do some eating.

See more [here](#).







## Day Four:

### Experience - Sunrise Kayaking

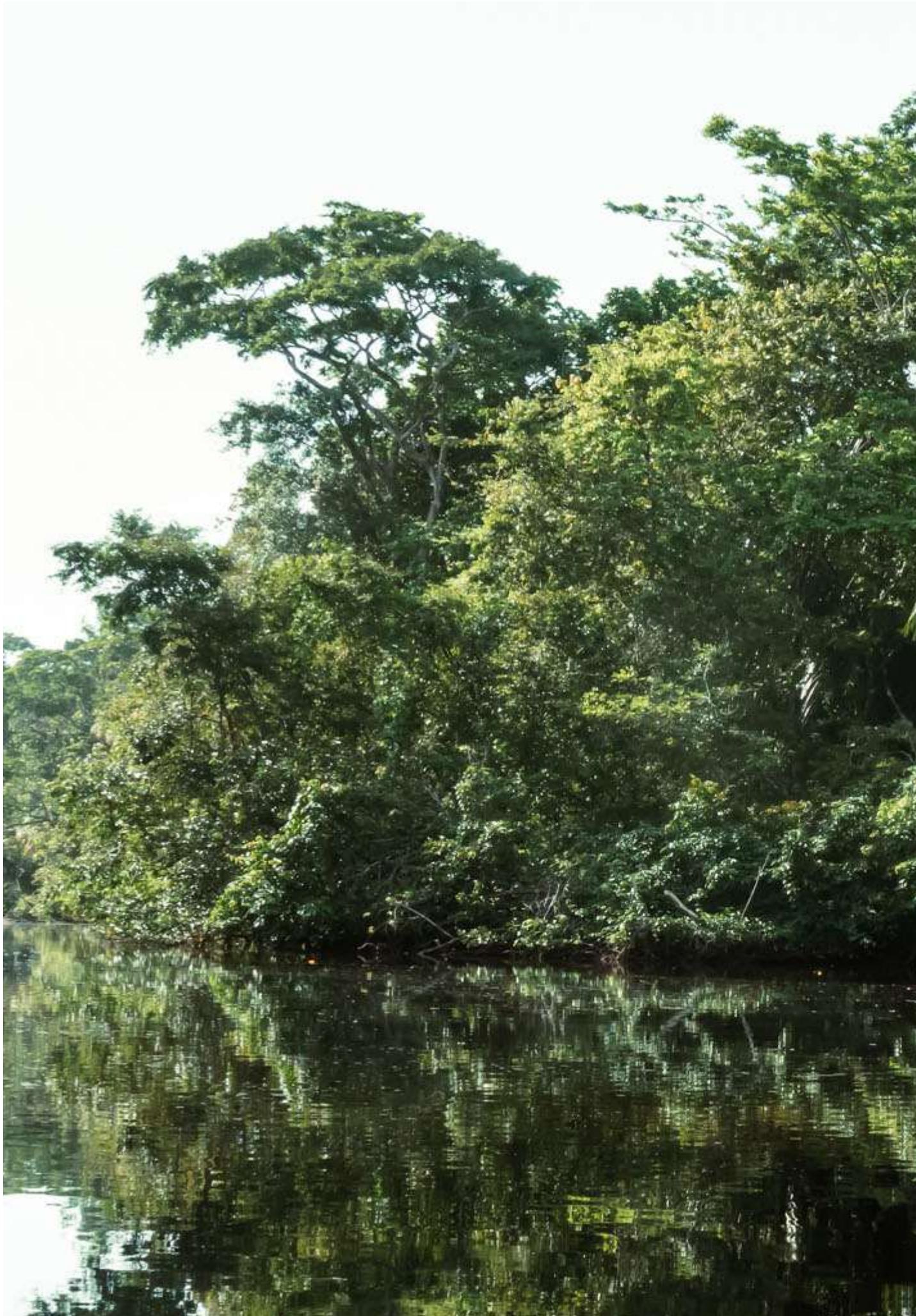
We started the day with a 6am sunrise kayak through the Tortuguero canals. This was arranged through the lodge and so we were picked up from reception, which at that time in the morning is crucial!

As soon as we hit the water the adventure began. Paddling through the natural canals we were transported to another world. With no engine we were able to drift silently through the water and sit back and relax as the jungle woke up all around us. Spider Monkeys jumping from branch to

branch, tropical birds having their morning bath, water snakes sitting in trees, a million different sounds coming together - we were surrounded by Costa Rican nature.

Two and a half hours exploring in our trusty kayaks flew by in the blink of an eye, we could have easily have done this all day.

It's important to note here that this was the one and only morning that it rained, but this did not matter in the slightest, and in fact the experience was made even more epic by the sound of rain pitter pattering tall around us.



## Day Five:

Transfer to Limon/Puerto Viejo. We left Mawamba Lodge, boarded a boat and made our way back to La Pavona where we hopped in a mini bus and headed for Limon. The journey there did not disappoint, as we drove through colourful little towns and along stunning volcano lined roads before arriving in the historic city of Limon for lunch.

We had lunch at a lovely little spot called Red Snapper in Limon with amazing views of the town and would highly recommend it.

### **Experience - A Tour of the Sloth Sanctuary**

Again in the spirit of honesty this was something I wasn't that excited about, Sloths are cool but did I want to spend two hours with them? Well it turns out I did, this was a really insightful and undeniably heart-warming experience.

The Sloth Sanctuary is home to the world's most famous Sloth, Buttercup. Buttercup was not only the sanctuary's first rescue but is also the oldest two finger Sloth to ever have lived in captivity at 28 years old.

The tour starts by meeting her, learning about the sloth species and being introduced to the vision of the sanctuary. After our amazing meet with Buttercup we visited the orphan nursery a small room filled with boxes each containing two tiny sloths, paired together to keep one another company. I can honestly say that it was one of the most adorable experiences I have ever had... and I don't use that word lightly!

More info [here](#).







## **Day Six:**

### **Experience - Exploring Cahuita National Park**

Cahuita National Park was established in 1970 to protect and preserve the coral reefs off this beautiful stretch of Caribbean coast. In order to get to the sea we had to walk for an hour through the thick heat of the park, a walk worth every bead of sweat as you would struggle to find a greener scene. The park boasts an amazing array of biodiversity with plants and trees of all shapes and sizes surrounding the wooden walkway leading to the beach. When we finally arrived we were rewarded with a spectacular scene, miles of tropical beach all to ourselves, jungle into white sand into crystal clear water. This is a beautiful place.

On the beach we were met by our boat captain on his colourful little boat. We shook his hand and hopped in, ready for snorkelling! A short boat ride through the stunning water later and we were jumping overboard to explore the reef.

That evening we stayed in the beautiful [Namuwoki Lodge](#).





## **Day 7**

And just like that our time on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast had come to an end.. Well almost, there was time for one last experience and that was the flight back to San Jose!

### **Experience - Flying Low**

This final experience was intended first and foremost as a practical transportation solution, as it cuts the journey time from Limon to San Jose from five and a half hours by road to forty five minutes in the air. However this experience turned out to be much more than just a flight of convenience.

We flew in a small 8 seater light plane and therefore were never that high off the ground. We flew for the best part of an hour over miles and miles of green rainforest, winding rivers, cloud covered mountains and tiny colourful villages. We were essentially getting to see the landscape that we had spent the last week exploring from a completely different perspective, from a birds eye view!





## Conclusion

If you are after a tropical adventure packed with incredible nature and action then this is for you. This is not a sit on your bottom soaking up the sunshine type holiday, it is a week of activity and variety, one that will stay with you long after the holiday is over.

It's important to say a huge thank you to the team at Visit Costa Rica for making it such an amazing week. For all your adventure planning needs head to <https://www.visitcostarica.com/uk/>

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