



Travel Guide: Panama and Costa Rica

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Why Costa Rica and Panama?

Breathtaking nature, endless beaches, fascinating culture and ideal surf spots make Panama and Costa Rica true paradises. But there are also health risks lurking behind these beautiful destinations. Find out how you can enjoy your vacation safely and well prepared.

We are here to help you!

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In our latest travel guide, we share essential health tips for your unforgettable trip to Panama and Costa Rica. Learn what you can do ahead of time to protect yourself from diseases such as yellow fever and the Zika virus.

Our experts share recommendations on how you can protect yourself from infection and respond quickly to health emergencies. With the advice in our magazine, you can prepare for a safe and carefree trip.

Your adventure in Panama and Costa Rica starts now, with the right knowledge in your pocket. Browse through our pages to prepare yourself optimally so you can enjoy every moment. We care about your health so you can focus on what really matters: An unforgettable trip you're sure to treasure.

The fascinating destinations of Panama and Costa Rica are located in the midst of the beauty of Central America. With their diverse wildlife, abundant rainforests and historic cities, they cast spell on adventurers, nature lovers and culture enthusiasts alike. But before you head out, it is important to be aware of the travel health aspects.

Arenal volcano in Costa Rica

Common route

Dive into the fascinating world of Central America on an unforgettable journey through Panama and Costa Rica. This diverse route takes you to the most spectacular places and highlights of these two countries.



Your journey begins on the breathtaking San Blas Islands, an archipelago off the coast of Panama. Here, in this heavenly island kingdom, you will immerse yourself in the unique culture of the Kuna-Yala indigenous people. Feel the warmth of the locals and be enchanted by their colorful handicrafts. The San Blas Islands are not only a place of cultural discovery, but also a place to relax on the sandy beaches and enjoy the turquoise waters.

The journey continues to Panama City, the fascinating metropolis of Panama. The modern skyline, forms an exciting contrast to the historic Casco Viejo. Stroll through the cobble streets of this UNESCO World Heritage Site and discover its vibrant cultural heritage. The view of the world-famous Panama Canal, which is the heart of this city, is breathtaking and a reminder of the amazing engineering that changed the world.



Kuba-Yala-Village in San Blas, Panama



Casco Viejo in Panama

Your next destination is Santa Catalina, a true paradise for surfers and nature lovers alike. Spectacular waves and untouched nature await you here. Hike through the jungle, watch exotic birds and relax on the endless beaches.



Surfer hut in Panama

In Boquete, you can explore lush rainforests and taste the world-famous Panamanian coffee. Here you can take part in exciting canopy tours and experience the spectacular nature.

The journey continues to Bocas del Toro. This archipelago offers opportunities for snorkeling, diving and relaxing on remote beaches. Treat yourself to local seafood dishes and experience the colorful hustle and bustle of the islanders.

Crossing the border to Costa Rica, you reach Puerto Viejo, a laidback coastal village. The heart of beach culture is beating here and you can let yourself drift in the relaxed atmosphere while enjoying the beauty of the Caribbean.

Experience the unique wildlife and the green canals in Tortuguero. Depending on the season, you have the rare opportunity to observe turtles building their nests. Tortuguero National Park is home to an abundance of animal species and offers unforgettable experiences in the midst of nature.



Leatherback turtle at the beach in Costa Rica

Immerse yourself in the vibrant culture of Costa Rica's capital, San José. Visit museums, markets and try the delicious Ticos cuisine. Here you can gain an insight into modern life in Costa Rica.

The journey continues past the majestic Arenal volcano to La Fortuna. In this region, you can relax in natural thermal springs and experience exciting adventures such as ziplining and white water rafting. The scenic beauty of this place will enchant you.



Waterfall in Arenal Volcano National Park

Finally, your journey takes you to Tamarindo, a water sports paradise on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. Here you can surf, snorkel and enjoy the sun on the endless beaches. The vibes are relaxed and inviting.

Your last stop is Santa Teresa, a laid-back surfer's paradise. Here you can experience the trendy surfer scene, discover local stores and try local delicacies.

This route offers you a wide range of adventure, relaxation, culture and nature. You will be rewarded with memories of a journey that will delight your senses and fill your soul.

Highlights & Lowlights

Discover the highlights and potential challenges of a trip to Panama and Costa Rica, from breathtaking natural beauty to cultural treasures. What high and lowlights await you on this unique trip?

Highlights

Natural beauty: From the San Blas Islands to the volcanoes in Costa Rica, there are countless breathtaking natural beauties to discover. The variety of landscapes is just impressive.



Lake in a crater in Costa Rica

Cultural diversity: The trip allows you to experience the unique culture of the Kuna-Yala indigenous people on the San Blas Islands, the vibrant city life in Panama City and the relaxed beach culture in Puerto Viejo.

Activities: Whether surfing in Santa Catalina, hiking in Boquete, snorkeling in Bocas del Toro or adventures in La Fortuna - there is a wealth of activities for adventure seekers.

Wildlife: Tortuguero is a paradise for wildlife spotting, including turtles in their nesting season. While in Costa Rica you can also see many other animal species in their natural habitat.



Sloth

Thermal springs: La Fortuna offers the opportunity to relax in natural thermal springs and admire the majestic Arenal volcano.

Cuisine: Taste the diverse cuisine of both countries, from fresh seafood in Bocas del Toro to traditional Ticos dishes in Costa Rica and the exotic flavors of Panama. The culinary diversity is a highlight for foodies.

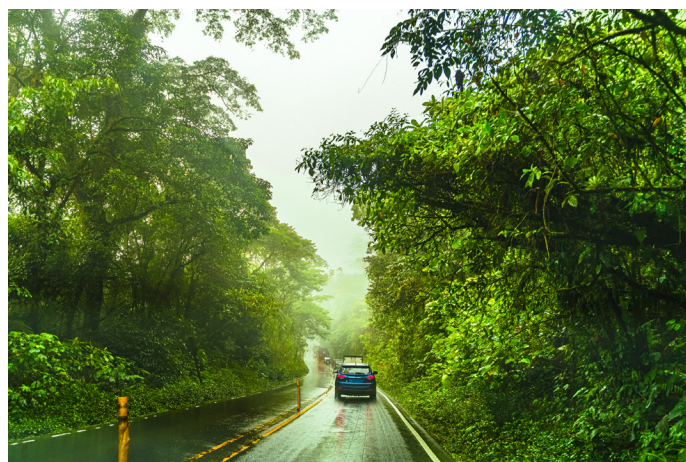
Lowlights

Travel distances: The trip involves some long drives between destinations, which can take time. Road conditions may vary depending on the region.

Language barrier: Although many people speak English, there may be a language barrier in more remote areas. Basic knowledge of Spanish can be helpful.

Precipitation: The rainy season in Costa Rica can last from May to November and some activities and roads may be restricted due to heavy rainfall.

Tourism: In some of the most popular tourist destinations, such as La Fortuna and Tamarindo, it can get quite crowded, especially during high season.



Wet road in Costa Rica



Parrot, Jaco in Costa Rica

Border crossings: Crossing the border between Panama and Costa Rica can sometimes be time-consuming and requires patience.



Crowd at the beach

Conclusion

A trip to Panama and Costa Rica offers a rich spectrum of natural wonders, cultural diversity and exciting activities. Although there are some challenges, the unforgettable highlights and experiences far outweigh them.

Health advice

Travel safe and informed. From yellow fever to malaria - find out which vaccinations are necessary and how you can protect yourself against diseases. You have to protect yourself and help keep the local population safe. Your safety is our concern.

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important to both protect your own health and prevent the spreading of yellow fever in a region with an inadequate infrastructure. Therefore, please be sure to check for any relevant recommendations before you travel.

What other vaccinations are recommended?

Generally, all vaccinations listed in the Swiss vaccination schedule are recommended. The vaccination schedule can be found on the website of the Federal Office of Public Health. Furthermore, protection against hepatitis A and hepatitis B is recommended.

How is the risk of malaria?

In Panama, travelers should be aware of the risk of malaria in regions such as Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí, Colón, Darién, Panamá and Veraguas, as well as in the indigenous provinces of Emberá, Kuna Yala and Ngäbe-Buglé. However, there is almost no risk of malaria transmission in areas such as Panamá Oeste, the Canal Zone and the capital Panama City.

Do I need to be vaccinated against yellow fever?

Yellow fever, a potentially fatal mosquito-borne disease, is most often found in eastern parts of Panama, with exceptions in Panama City and the San Blas Islands. Fortunately, the spread of this disease remains limited to these areas. Vaccination is recommended if you intend to visit these regions or if you plan to travel on to countries with corresponding entry regulations, such as Nicaragua. It is

Stunned raccoon in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, malaria is mainly an issue in the provinces of Alajuela and Limón, in other parts of the country the risk of infection is low to almost non-existent.

Travelers should be aware of the specific malaria risk areas before their trip and take appropriate protective measures, such as taking malaria medication and using insect repellent. Careful travel preparation is important to minimize the risk of malaria and thus ensure a safe stay, for example taking into account current health guidelines.

How do I protect myself against mosquitoes?

To effectively avoid mosquito bites, it is important to take appropriate protective measures both during the day and at night. It is best to wear long-sleeved clothing in a light color that has been treated with insecticides such as No-bite®Textile. Use repellents such as Anti-Brumm® with at least 30% DEET regularly on the skin, preferably after applying sunscreen. At night, we recommend sleeping under a mosquito net that has been treated with insect repellent or turning on the air conditioning or ceiling fan. These tips will help you stay protected from mosquitoes both during the day and at night and are particularly useful in areas where mosquito-borne diseases are common. These include diseases such as dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika.

What about food hygiene on site?

Generally, Panama and Costa Rica have clean water and good food hygiene in tourist areas. Many hostel and hotel managers claim that you can drink the tap water. However, we still recommend being careful and only drinking fil-

tered water and eating cooked, fried and peeled food. This will help you avoid traveler's diarrhea. If you do get sick, it is important to drink enough and eat salty food. If you also have a fever, stomach cramps or blood in your stool, you should seek medical help. Loperamide can be taken for simple diarrhea for short-term symptom relief. Typhoid fever, a serious form of food poisoning, is extremely rare in Panama/Costa Rica, which is why you do not primarily need prophylaxis.



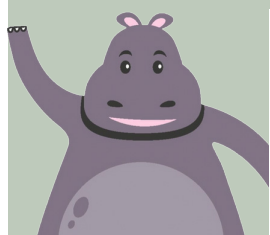
Food in a restaurant in San José

Should I get vaccinated against rabies?

The WHO has not recorded any current cases of rabies in humans or dogs in either country. However, wild animals such as bats can transmit the disease through scratching or biting injuries. As the risk is low because wild animals are shy and rarely bite, a rabies vaccination is not primarily recommended. However, a vaccination could be considered when further traveling to Central or South America. In the event of scratching or biting injuries, it is strongly advised to clean the wound immediately with soap and water for ten to 15 minutes, disinfect it and seek immediate medical advice at a hospital.

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Conclusion

Costa Rica and Panama are both beautiful travel destinations that have a lot to offer: Breathtaking flora and fauna, culinary specialties and warm-hearted inhabitants. In order to be able to travel with peace of mind, it is advantageous to deal with the possible risks of illness in advance. It therefore makes sense to take advantage of travel advice, including any vaccinations.