



*WWF INSIDER JOURNEYS*

# COSTA RICA'S NATURAL LEGACY



## TRIP ITINERARY

A Journey through Costa Rica with Esteban Brenes,  
WWF's Conservation Finance Director

February 22–March 3, 2023

Costa Rica has been a pioneer in protection of its natural assets since WWF began working there in the 1970s. In 1988, WWF arranged a \$3 million debt-for-nature swap in Costa Rica, a conservation finance concept that has been successfully replicated throughout the world and continues to be a model used to protect and sustainably manage some of the most valuable natural resources in the world.

While many of WWF’s early projects are now sustained independently, Costa Rica’s conservation legacy can be celebrated and enjoyed across the country. Perhaps no itinerary shows you more of its varied wild treasures than this one. Flanked by miles of empty beaches on the Pacific and



the Caribbean, Costa Rica’s interior is a lush tangle of rain forest, mist-veiled mountains, rushing rivers, active volcanoes, and habitat for some of the greatest biodiversity on Earth. Within the layers of green upon green, thousands of species thrive—gigantic ferns, magenta orchids, neon-bright parrots, iridescent hummingbirds, three-toed sloths, monkeys, peccaries, agoutis, crocodiles,

sea turtles, iguanas and frogs...and that’s just for starters! Amid the colors and cacophony of the tropical jungle, your senses have never been so engaged.

## ITINERARY AT A GLANCE 10 Days

Day	Date	Location	Accommodation
1	February 22	San José, Costa Rica	Hotel Hacienda Belen
2 & 3	February 23 & 24	Tortuguero National Park—Private Boat & Rain Forest Walk	Evergreen Lodge
4 & 5	February 25 & 26	Osa Peninsula—Exploring Corcovado National Park	Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge
6	February 27	Corcovado / San José / Monteverde Cloud Forest	Senda Monteverde Hotel
7	February 28	Canopy Skywalk / Coffee Farm / Curi-Cancha Reserve	Senda Monteverde Hotel
8	March 1	Lake Arenal Private Cruise / Danaus Eco-Center / Night Walk	Arenal Observatory Lodge
9	March 2	Arenal Hanging Bridges / Hot Springs	Arenal Observatory Lodge
10	March 3	Bird Walk / San José / Depart	

## ITINERARY IN DETAIL

### Day 1, February 22: San José, Costa Rica

Our Costa Rica adventure begins on arrival in San Jose, where you're met at the airport and transferred to our luxury hacienda-style hotel. This evening, gather for a welcome dinner with our Expedition Leader, WWF hosts, and fellow travelers.

*Overnight Hotel Hacienda Belen (D)*



### Day 2, February 23: Tortuguero National Park—Private Boat Cruise

A chartered flight takes us directly to Tortuguero, one of the best places to view wildlife in Costa Rica. We're quickly immersed in tropical wilderness as we travel by boat through the canals to our ecolodge. Tortuguero is famous for its endangered green sea turtles, which nest here from July to October, and we learn about them on a visit to the Sea Turtle Conservancy. The Sea Turtle Conservancy (formerly Caribbean Conservation Corporation) is a WWF partner that was instrumental in supporting the development and management of Tortuguero. Tortuguero is an excellent example of how protecting wildlife can benefit the economies of surrounding communities. Then, take a walk through Tortuguero village to renowned Miss Junnie's restaurant for a typical Caribbean lunch. Hear from a local resident about the importance of coconuts as a food source during Tortuguero's initial settlement and their continuing prominence in the Caribbean diet, and taste the coconut water inside the freshly cracked fruit. This afternoon, a private boat cruise reveals plentiful wildlife as we navigate the maze of canals that lace the dense rain forest. We may see spider, howler

and white-faced capuchin monkeys, tree sloths, caimans, and a spectrum of colorful birds.

***Please Note:*** All travelers will have the complimentary opportunity to “adopt” an endangered sea turtle during our visit to the Sea Turtle Conservancy. The adoption process includes material about this conservation program, an adoption form, and a free one-year membership to the conservancy. Membership allows participants to track the status of their turtle. Guests traveling from July through October may be able to book an optional excursion to see sea turtles on the beach late at night.



*Though we can't book this activity in advance or guarantee availability, our Expedition Leader can arrange it upon arrival through the lodge, if space is available.*  
*Overnight Evergreen Lodge (B,L,D)*

### Day 3, February 24: Tortuguero—Private Boat Cruise & Rain Forest Walk

A dawn birding excursion is an option for early risers. Tortuguero is home to hundreds of different bird species including the endangered green macaw, Amazon kingfisher, toucan, egrets, and herons. After breakfast, take a morning boat cruise through the canals. Here in the tropics, steady sunlight, constant rain, and warm temperatures create an intense incubator for a profusion of species. Traveling by boat allows us to cover a large swath of Tortuguero's rain forest, revealing fascinating microhabitats and varied wildlife not easily viewed on land. Later, we explore a network of private trails on foot in search of more tropical wildlife before one more private boat cruise. Ocean and freshwater meet in this network of lagoons, canals, and beaches—creating an environment rich in biodiversity that's endlessly fascinating to explore.

*Overnight Evergreen Lodge (B,L,D)*



### Day 4, February 25: Osa Peninsula—Corcovado National Park

Our destination today is the remote Osa Peninsula at the southern end of Costa Rica's Pacific coast. Just getting there is an adventure, as we fly direct via chartered plane to the peninsula and board 4x4 vehicles to reach the village of Agujitas on Drake Bay. Here, we board a boat and make a wet landing on the beach, then ride tractors up the hill to reach our accommodation for the next three nights, a luxury

ecolodge on the edge of Corcovado National Park, the crown jewel of Costa Rica's national park system, created in 1975 with the help of WWF. Casa Corcovado, surrounded by a 170-acre private reserve, offers convenient access to Corcovado National Park, which is the best example of a Central American tropical forest now under protection and described by National Geographic as the "most biologically intense place on Earth." Here among Costa

Rica's largest trees, we find Central America's densest populations of scarlet macaws, tapir, and the highly elusive jaguar. After lunch, walk the Sendero Azul, a short private trail on the lodge reserve. Woody vines, towering trees, and walking palms line the way as we search for sloths, monkeys, agoutis, coati, and intriguing birdlife including Baird's trogon, spectacled owl, and black-cheeked ant tanager.

*Overnight Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge (B,L,D)*

## Day 5, February 26: Exploring Corcovado National Park

Explore more of Corcovado's treasures on two nature walks today. As our long journey to reach this place attests, the Osa Peninsula is a wild and remote locale. It supports one of the world's largest remaining lowland rain forests and is considered Costa Rica's last wilderness frontier. Corcovado National Park, which covers 100,000 acres and one-third of the peninsula, includes at least 13 different ecosystems and protects a multitude of endemic wildlife and plant species. This biological diversity stronghold contains half of Costa Rica's animal species, including scarlet macaw, toucan, parrots, all four monkey species found throughout the country, and jaguar, although these shy cats are rarely seen. On guided walks, look for the many fascinating creatures that reside in Corcovado's ancient forests.

*Overnight Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge (B,L,D)*



## Day 6, February 27: Corcovado / San José / Monteverde Cloud Forest

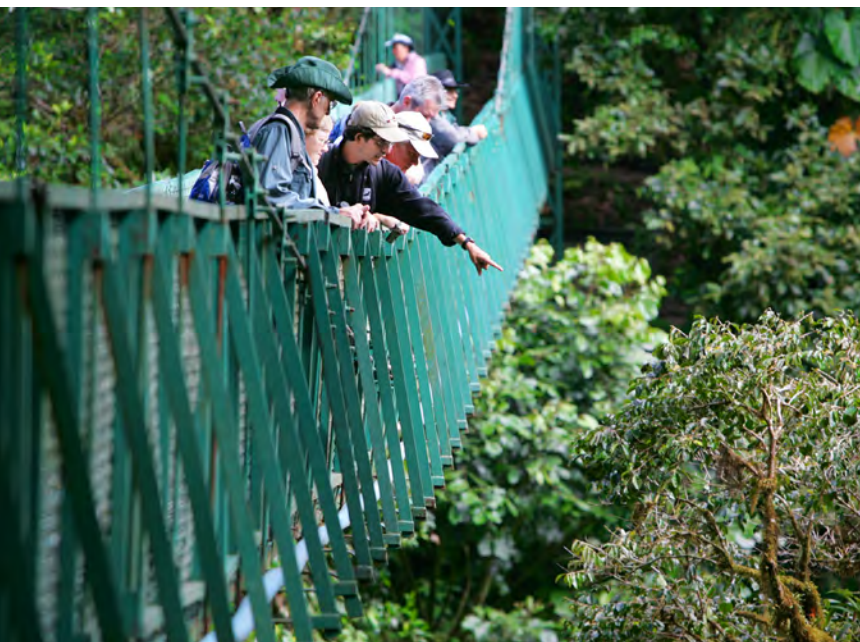
Return to Drake Bay airstrip via boat and 4x4 for our short-chartered flight back to San José. Leaving the city behind, wind up twisting roads from coastal lowlands into the cool heights of Monteverde, which means "green mountain." Moisture here doesn't typically come from rain but rather from the constant mists that swath the mountaintops, creating the cloud forest environment. Straddling the spine of Costa Rica's continental divide, Monteverde Cloud Forest

Reserve was established in 1972 with the help of WWF and others. The Preserve supports 2.5% of worldwide biodiversity, including 100 mammal species and 161 different amphibians and reptiles. Many of these are indicator species, which means they are sensitive to environmental changes and can alert us when an ecosystem is threatened. Some of these unique creatures are found only in the high mountains of Costa Rica and neighboring Panama.

Our secluded ecolodge offers the ideal base for exploring, surrounded by lush gardens, dense forest and the melodious calls of birds in the canopy—more than 400 species flourish here. This evening, visit the nearby Monteverde Institute to hear a talk about the three-wattled bellbird. Just four populations of this Central American endemic remain, one of which is found in this area. This private talk by an expert biologist will cover conservation, restoration, and reforestation of the Pacific slope habitats of this bird known for its distinctive chiming call. Other highland endemics include the umbrella bird, emerald toucanets, and the resplendent quetzal, the iridescent bird sacred to the indigenous people of these remote mountains.

*Overnight Senda Monteverde Hotel (B,L,D)*

## Day 7, February 28: Canopy Skywalk / Coffee Farm / Curi-Cancha Reserve



Monteverde is the most studied montane cloud forest environment in the world, and one of the world's most threatened ecosystems. Nurtured by perpetual mists, it harbors an estimated 2,500 species of plants including giant strangler figs, a profusion of epiphytes that drape the forest from canopy to floor, and 300 different kinds of orchid. Spot wild relatives of many familiar houseplants such as philodendrons, bromeliads, ficus and ferns, and look for colorful butterflies flitting

among the leaves. We may also catch glimpses of various monkeys, sloth, olingo, porcupine, coati, and agouti. The intricate web of life in the cloud forest is on display via the Skywalk, a 1.5-mile network of elevated walkways that lift us into the canopy. About 90% of all organisms in a rain forest live in the treetops, which the sun strikes to produce abundant food. More adventurous travelers can choose an optional zip line tour through the canopy.

Next, we tour a coffee farm that is a standard-setter for sustainable agriculture, organic growing methods and climate change adaptation – and of course there’s a chance to taste a variety of roastings. This afternoon, take a nature walk through the Curi-Cancha Reserve, a private forest sanctuary frequented by a great variety of birds including the resplendent quetzal and bellbird. Curi-Cancha is 50% virgin forest, with most of the remainder restored to native forest from pastureland in recent decades. Mammal sightings may include agouti, coati, armadillo, kinkajou, ocelot, sloth, and three species of monkey: mantled howler, white-faced capuchin, and spider monkey.

*Overnight Senda Monteverde Hotel (B,L,D)*



## Day 8, March 1: Lake Arenal Private Cruise / Danaus Eco-Center / Night Walk

Leaving Monteverde early this morning, we drive around the vast expanse of Lake Arenal, enjoying stunning vistas en route. For a different perspective, including expansive views of Arenal Volcano, enjoy a private boat ride on the lake. After lunch in the town of La Fortuna, continue to Arenal Observatory Lodge. The lodge is set high on a ridge facing the famous volcano, surrounded by thousands of acres of tropical rain forest. Seismologists from the Smithsonian Institution and the National University of Costa Rica closely monitor the volcano from the research station at the lodge. Until 2010, minor eruptions had been constant, with the symmetrical cone spewing magma and smoke on an almost daily basis. Since then, however, the 5,437-foot volcano has been in a dormant phase, though still simmering inside.

This afternoon we visit Danaus Eco-Center, a private ecological reserve with programs focused on conservation and environmental education. On a tour with a local naturalist guide, view Costa Rica's famous red poison dart frogs and other wildlife, following nature trails among 300 species of tropical plants. After dinner at the lodge, take a guided night walk to see nocturnal wildlife, including the famous frog pond with its noisy chorus of croaks and clicks.

*Overnight Arenal Observatory Lodge (B,L,D)*

## Day 9, March 2: Arenal Hanging Bridges / Hot Springs

Explore the biodiversity of the rain forest this morning on the network of trails surrounding the lodge. After lunch, take a guided walk over the Arenal Hanging Bridges, a series of suspension bridges overlooking a dense canopy of primary rain forest with views of Arenal Volcano and Lake Arenal. One of the most striking ecotourism projects in Costa Rica, the bridges range from 16 to 330 feet long and form part of a 2-mile trail that loops through the rain forest. Along the way, view lush vegetation, colorful flowers, and both resident and migratory tropical birds, including a multitude of hummingbirds. Look up in search of sleepy sloths high in the branches. Where there is volcanic activity, there is usually geothermal activity, and in the late afternoon we have a chance to soak in a nearby hot springs before returning to the lodge for a farewell dinner.

*Overnight Arenal Observatory Lodge (B,L,D)*



## Day 10, March 2: Bird Walk / San José / Depart

After an optional early morning bird walk and a final breakfast in the shadow of the volcano, return by road to San José to connect with homeward flights. Please schedule flight departures no earlier than 2:00 pm today.

***Please note:*** *The itinerary provided is meant as a guideline and is subject to change without notice. On rare occasions, it may be necessary to deviate from our regular itinerary for reasons beyond our control. In these instances, we will provide the best available alternative.*



# Meet Our Expert



## Esteban Brenes, Director

Esteban joined WWF's Conservation Finance team in July 2001 and has worked on debt-for-nature swaps, design and evaluation of conservation funds, ecosystem services and financial sustainability studies for protected areas systems in several countries in Latin America, Madagascar, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Indonesia. Based in Costa Rica, he leads major initiatives to design and implement conservation finance mechanisms to support long-term, self-sustaining conservation programs. Prior to joining WWF, Esteban spent five years in the World Bank's Environmental

Department, focusing on issues such as carbon emissions trading, green finance, natural resource management, and environmental user fees. Prior to the World Bank, Esteban was an associate attorney with Facio & Cañas, an international law firm in San José, Costa Rica. Esteban received a law degree from the University of Costa Rica Law School in 1994 and a master's in environmental law from George Washington University in 1996.

In his personal time, Esteban has served on boards for several Costa Rican environmental NGOs focused on marine conservation, environmental policy, protected areas, and sustainable forestry. Esteban was born and raised on his family farm on the foothills of the Irazu Volcano where he learned to appreciate nature, especially the remarkable cloud forest, which is home to towering oak trees and the vibrantly colored quetzal.

## What to Expect and Physical Requirements

This trip requires a moderate level of activity. This adventure does not require a high degree of physical fitness, though our days in Costa Rica generally start quite early and are very full of activities. In order to participate in daily excursions, travelers must be able to walk unassisted for a minimum of two miles over uneven terrain and often muddy, slippery surfaces, up and down inclines and steps with some altitude gain. This itinerary includes a number of short- to medium-length walks over a variety of terrain, including gravel, pavement, boardwalks, and dirt trails, sometimes over large roots and rocks (note that all walks can be more difficult to navigate during inclement weather). In Tortuguero and Corcovado, expect to be engaged in two three-hour excursions per day in very hot and humid conditions. In order to get to Casa Corcovado and participate in all activities there, travelers will need to be able to wade into the ocean, potentially knee-deep, over slick rock, rolling pebbles and sand, sit on the flat edge of a small boat and swing both legs over the side. Sea conditions may make for a bumpy ride, and we may at times be in the boat for over an hour at a time. Although the boat is equipped with a sunshade, travelers may be exposed to the full intensity of the sun, as well as wind, rain, and sea-spray. Roads may be bumpy on drives.

February and March are some of the best months to visit Costa Rica when the weather is at its driest and brightest. As a tropical country, rain is possible at any time of year, even in the dry season. It's Costa Rica's rainfall that makes it so lush and beautiful. Average temperatures are consistent across the year, but vary by location, with highs around 90°F in the coastal and lowland area, and lows around 77°F in San José & Central Valley.

## Accommodations



### Costa Rica Marriott Hotel Hacienda Belen

Voted one of Central America's best hotels by Conde Nast Traveler, this colonial hacienda-style hotel surrounded by lavish gardens offers resort-style accommodations amid a 30-acre coffee plantation.



### Evergreen Lodge

Tucked deep within the rain forest just five minutes' drive from Tortuguero National Park, this rustic yet comfortable ecolodge enjoys a superb location for exploring the region's wildlife wonders.



### Casa Corcovado Jungle Lodge

Enjoying a prime location on the edge of Corcovado National Park, this premier ecolodge is a deluxe outpost in one of Costa Rica's last true wilderness areas that offers exceptional comfort in nature.



### Senda Monteverde Hotel

This new luxury ecolodge located high on Costa Rica's continental divide features 24 suites in contemporary mountain bungalows with a focus on fresh farm-to-table dining.



### Arenal Observatory Lodge

Located on a private 870-acre reserve adjacent to Arenal Volcano National Park, this famous lodge within the rain forest enjoys a panorama of the volcano from across a deep valley, plus views of Lake Arenal.

# About WWF Insider Journeys

This trip is an invitation-only conservation travel program for our closest supporters, along with friends and family, to see firsthand the positive impact World Wildlife Fund is making. These custom-designed journeys are led by WWF experts and offer exclusive opportunities to discover the wildlife and ecosystems we protect; meet community members whose lives are being improved because of our work, and immerse yourself in the worlds of our field staff and partners on the ground. Come explore the best of the natural world and see how together we are making a difference for our planet.

## About Our Travel Partner



This journey is being arranged by Natural Habitat Adventures of Boulder, Colorado. For more than a decade, WWF has partnered with Nat Hab to take travelers to view nature's greatest sights. WWF selected Natural Habitat as its partner because of its long-standing commitment to conservation and the exceptional quality of its adventures.

## Reservation Information & Trip Details

For reservations and additional information, please contact Court Whelan at Natural Habitat Adventures at 888-993-8687, (Int'l) 303-449-3711 or [courtwh@nathab.com](mailto:courtwh@nathab.com).

**DATES:** February 22–March 3, 2023 (dates are tentative and may shift once confirmed)

**GROUP SIZE:** Limited to approximately 8 guests

**LAND COST:** \$7295 (+internal air) per person, double occupancy\*  
Internal Air cost: \$981 per person (this will be listed separately on our invoicing)\*  
Single supplement: \$895  
(prices based on 2021 and subject to change slightly)

**DEPOSIT:** \$500 per person

**INCLUDED:** Trip price includes: Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s), travel costs for your WWF Expert, local guides and lodge staff, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, most gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

Internal air cost includes: All private charter flights within the itinerary (this will be listed separately on our invoicing).

**NOT INCLUDED:** Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees (if any), optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls,

laundry and internet, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

**PAYMENTS:** A deposit of \$500 confirms your space. Payments are accepted by credit card or by check made out to Natural Habitat.

**CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS:** Cancellations must be received in writing at Natural Habitat Adventures by US mail, email or fax. At the time Natural Habitat Adventures receives your written cancellation, the following per person penalties apply: On or before 120 days before the trip: Full refund minus \$100. On or before 60 days before the trip: Forfeit 50% of tour cost. After 60 days before the trip: No refund.

**INSURANCE:** Since the areas we travel to on this trip are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require medical evacuation insurance for our guests' safety. If you decline the medical evacuation insurance coverage offered by Natural Habitat, we request that you send us documentation of the independent coverage you have selected. We will add the cost of a medical evacuation policy to your tour invoice until you provide our office with proof of coverage including your insurance company's name, contact number and your individual policy number. Thank you for understanding that our policy exists exclusively in the interest of our guests' safety.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

#### **GETTING THERE & GETTING HOME:**

Plan to arrive in San Jose by 4:30 pm in order to make it to the hotel in time for a 6 pm welcome dinner on Day 1. You may depart anytime on the final day.

We can best serve you if our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk makes your reservations, as our staff is intimately familiar with the special requirements of this program and can arrange the most efficient travel. Please call us at 800-543-8917. Note that while we offer you the best possible rates available to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may find better fares online.

While adventures are designed specifically for WWF's closest supporters and enhanced with WWF Experts, exclusive site visits, and enriched content, a minimum number of guests is required to run each trip. To avoid canceling, WWF and Nat Hab may fill unsold spots with WWF and non-WWF members.