

BIG FIVE®

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Costa Rica



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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



San Jose

Average Temperature

°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	66	67	69	70	71	70	69	69	70	68	68	66

Average Precipitation

in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	0.6	0.2	0.8	1.8	9	9.5	8.3	9.5	12	11.8	5.7	1.6

Arenal Volcano

Average Temperature

°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	75.5	75.5	77.5	78	79	78.5	78	78.5	78	77.5	77	76

Average Precipitation

in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	7.48	5.14	3.58	3.7	10.23	16.15	19.87	17.05	16.07	16.98	12	10.1

Monteverde

Average Temperature

°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	60.5	71	62	63	64	64	63	63	63	63	62.5	63

Average Precipitation

in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	6.3	3.82	1.65	4.8	13.7	16.54	14.13	18.03	19.41	16.77	16.89	12.99

Manuel Antonio

Average Temperature

°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	78	78	80	80	80	79	78	78	79	79	79	78

Average Precipitation

in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	2.83	1.42	2.36	6.57	15.43	17.05	18.15	18.82	20.79	25.35	15.28	6.65

WEATHER

Costa Rica is a tropical country that contains several distinct climatic zones. It knows no winter or summer as such. Most regions have rainy seasons from May to November and dry seasons from December to April. Some rain, however, may reasonably be expected in the dry season and rainless periods during the rainy season – particularly on the Atlantic coast. Although some roads are impassable in the wet season, it's still worthwhile to visit at this time, and things are much quieter. April, May and mid-October to mid-December should give you the best of both worlds.

TIME ZONES

Costa Rica is GMT – 6 hours, which means Costa Rica observes the same time as U.S. Central Standard Time, but it does not use daylight savings time.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

PASSPORTS: For International travel, U.S. and Canadian passports must be **valid for at least six months** from date of departure, containing at least 3 blank pages are necessary.

VISAS: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas. You will find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: **www.trivisa.com**. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

Note: Remember to carry with you in a safe place photocopies of all important documents in the event your passport or other documents are lost or stolen. Also, it's a good idea to have a passport photo with you. As a tourist, you will need to produce your passport when booking in at hotels, changing money or travelers' checks and prove your identity whenever requested by a policeman.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

International airport: International flights arrive at San José's Juan Santamaría International Airport. The airport in Liberia, 217km (135mi) northwest of San José, has been upgraded and now operates as a second-string international airport. After obtaining your luggage, exit the airport. If you have booked a complete package with Big Five tours, a representative will be holding a sign identifying you or him/her. **Departure Tax:** Currently, the tax is about US\$26 per person on international flights, subject to change without notice.

COSTA RICA CUSTOMS

No customs duties are charged on personal luggage, which includes items for personal and professional use, as long as they do not appear in quantities that suggest commercial intent.

Costa Rican law requires that baggage be examined and that travelers submit customs declarations listing all articles acquired abroad, including fruit, vegetables, meat, meat products, biological products such as vaccinations, serums, etc. Families need to fill out only one declaration for all family members.

Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

US CUSTOMS

Personal Exemption: U.S. citizens returning from Costa Rica have a \$800 duty-free exemption. There are limits on some items. For a list of exempt items and other current information, you can go to the Customs & Border Protection homepage at www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml or write the US Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

HEALTH

International travelers should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. No required immunizations are currently required for entering Costa Rica, which is probably one of the safest destinations in the developing world, from a general health standpoint. All vaccinations that you do have should be recorded on an International Health Certificate, available from your physician or health department.

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you are traveling between countries, and one of those countries have areas where Yellow Fever can be found.

PLEASE NOTE: This notice is from the government of Costa Rica. Even though yellow fever was eradicated in Costa Rica in 1953, national authorities are worried about cases of Selvatic Yellow Fever in some countries of Africa, South America and the Caribbean. Visitors coming from risk areas, such as Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, French Guyana, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leona, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Sudan, Cameroon and Burkina Faso must carry “The International Yellow Fever Vaccine Certification” before arriving in Costa Rican territory. Otherwise, border and airport authorities will not allow them to get in the country without it.” This would apply in the event you are traveling to multiple countries during one trip.

Costa Rica’s public health system (known as the CAJA) has fine hospitals in San José and in the provincial capitals, plus an extensive network of smaller hospitals and medical centers in other towns and cities. Costa Rica also has many private hospitals and clinics. As a matter of fact, Costa Rica's dentists and plastic surgeons are among the best in the world and, because prices are much more reasonable than in North America or Europe, they do a thriving business with international patients. In San José, major clinics have 24-hour pharmacies.

Malaria risk exists throughout the year, mostly in the benign vivax form, in the rural areas below 700m, especially in the cantons of Matina, Los Chiles (Alajuela province) and Talamanca (Limón province). Lower transmission risk exists in 20 cantons in the provinces of Guanacaste, Alajuela and Heredia. There is negligible or no risk of malaria in the other cantons of the country. There have been many confirmed cases of dengue fever in the areas of Puntarenas and Guanacaste on the Pacific Coast, and Limón on the Atlantic Coast. Travelers should take prevention measures against mosquito bites, by using repellents and by wearing sleeved shirts and long trousers.

Other risks: Hepatitis A, B and C occur.

Paragonimiasis (oriental lung fluke) and lymphatic and bancroftian filariasis have been reported in Costa Rica. Cutaneous and mucocutaneous leishmaniasis have also been reported. Rabies is widespread throughout Central America. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage. If you wear contact lenses or glasses, we suggest you bring an extra pair and cleaning fluid.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. *Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. To receive these documents, call 404-332-4565 and follow the prompts. You can also get information on the CDC’s website at www.cdc.gov/travel.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

In general, light weight, fast-drying clothing is preferable. Many people choose all cotton but cotton/synthetic blends are also cool to wear and don’t wrinkle as much. Temperatures can change drastically over the course of a day when traveling from, say, from lowlands to highlands. Be prepared by dressing in layers. Bring a jacket for cool, windy conditions at high elevations but you may also need sunscreen if you have a calm, sunny day due to altitude.

If going to remote areas, bring enough of each item to last at least half the trip because you can’t count on laundry service everywhere, and sometimes hand washing takes too long to dry in humid areas.

Generally, Costa Ricans dress casually, even in San José, although somewhat dressier attire is the norm for performances at the National Theater, for example, or at first class restaurants. While it used to be inappropriate to wear shorts downtown, it is more common practice -- particularly among young men and women. But women in shorts should be prepared for the male Latin reactions of blatant staring, whistles and

comments, which are best ignored. Because one pair of boots/shoes always gets muddy or wet to some degree, it is important to have dry footwear to change into. Consider bringing a pair of slip-on or river sandals (which fasten at the ankle and were originally designed for rafting) for wet boardings and landings and for showers. Comfortable hiking boots with thick soles and deep tread are best for forest trails.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

Please note that as of this writing the luggage restriction on flights within Costa Rica is 25 pounds per person, including carry-on.

Limitations are set by each government and are subject to change without notice.

In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations. Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions may apply for charter flights. This will vary according to destination. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

MONEY

Currency: Colon (pronounced like *cologne*). Coins come in two formats. The older, silver-colored coins are larger and come in 5, 10, 20 denominations (only large coins can be used in the few public telephones that haven't converted to phone cards). The newer, gold-colored coins are smaller and come in 5, 10, 25, 50, 100 and 500 denominations. Bills come in different colors – one for each denomination of 50, 100, 500, 1000, 2000, 5000 and 10000.

Cash: If you use US currency, make sure the bills are in good condition. Your change will be in colones, except in very rare circumstances, so plan accordingly. ATM machines are becoming more available in San Jose and in some outlying towns. *The best place to change money is in your hotel. Be sure to carry cash in small denominations because hotels in rural areas can often only change small amounts.*

Credit Cards: Major international credit cards (Master Card/Visa/AMEX) are accepted at most hotels, stores, restaurants and car rental firms, while at smaller businesses one should be prepared to pay in the local

currency. Recently, Master Card and some Visa cards have started to implement a foreign transaction fee of 3%. This applies to all purchases made outside the US processed by non-US based banks. You may want to verify this with your credit card issuer prior to travel to verify if this charge applies to your account.

Travelers' checks: Traveler's checks get very poor exchange rates in the country, and some hotels will penalize you for using them. Credit cards are safer option. If you use checks, you need to present your passport or a copy.

Banking in Costa Rica: National banks operate quite differently than banks in North America, and can be frustrating, at times. Tellers only look after certain transactions so you cannot do all transactions at one window. You get in one line to have someone to type up an order for you to change traveler's checks. Then, you go to another teller who gives you money. Make sure you pay attention when they point out the teller because that's where your traveler's checks and passport will be. It's always best to do your banking in the morning because, every once in a while the rules change and certain transactions - like changing dollars - are only carried out before 2:00 p.m. (as is true in much of Latin America). In San José, numerous private banks have recently been chartered. Unless you have an account with them, private banks impose a service charge on all currency transactions. Private banks in the Central Valley keep longer hours than the national banks but also charge service fees if you have no account. Some offer service on Saturday. Having said all that, change is coming to Costa Rica. There have been important purchases of local banks by large international banking conglomerates. Today, the largest private banks include Scotiabank (formerly Interfin), Citibank, HSBC and GE Money (Credomatic). Branches have popped up everywhere, mostly in tourist towns. At private banks, most services can be conducted from the same window and most have an ATM.

LANGUAGE

Spanish is the official language, however, English is widely spoken, particularly in urban centers, and a growing number of professionals in the tourism business speak French, German and other languages.

ELECTRICITY

Compatible with that of North America, 110 Volts. Three-hole grounded plugs are very uncommon so, if you have equipment requiring that system be sure to bring an adapter. Most two-hole plug-ins accept plugs with either round and flat prongs, including the plugs with flat prongs of two different widths. However, you will occasionally run into the type that accepts only flat prongs of equal width.

FOOD & DRINK

With the exception of a few rural areas, Costa Rica is serviced by the National Water Company, and water is safe to drink. But note that the water is normally heavily chlorinated and, while relatively safe, may cause mild abdominal upsets. Drinking water outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and sterilization is advisable. Restaurants, hotels and other facilities with their own water source, usually a well, have their water tested regularly. If you have any doubts about the water, ask the owners. If you prefer bottled water, it is easily available throughout the country. It is highly advisable that you carry water with you on all hikes to avoid dehydration. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe for consumption.

As a general rule when traveling anywhere, eat only thoroughly cooked foods. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it. Never eat undercooked ground beef and poultry, raw eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products. Raw shellfish is particularly dangerous to persons who have liver disease or compromised immune systems.

Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat. There is little risk that you will get sick from eating the food anywhere in Costa Rica. But, as you would at home, use your judgment. Note that pesticide use in Costa Rica is unregulated. Always wash vegetables in water known to be safe. And insure that any fruits you eat you peel yourself. Otherwise, stick to staples such as bananas and oranges. Most of the better hotel restaurants are usually safe places to try the wide variety of tropical fruit served in breakfast buffets including pineapple, melons, papaya, mangos and watermelon. Other local fruits worth trying in-season include jocotes, maracuya (passion fruit), guanabana (sour sap), guayaba (guava), cas, and for the more audacious, maranon (cashews), nances and nisperos. Costa Rican cuisine is simple and chefs shun spices. Comida típica, or native dishes, rely heavily on rice and beans. In fact, gallo pinto, the national dish of fried rice and black beans, is as ubiquitous as is the hamburger in North America,

particularly as a breakfast (desayuno) staple. Many meals are derivatives, including arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) or arroz con tuna. At lunch, gallo pinto becomes the casado (married): rice and beans supplemented with cabbage-and-tomato salad, fried plantains, and meat. Vegetables do not form a large part of the diet. Food staples include carne (beef, sometimes called bistek), pollo (chicken), and pescado (fish). Beef and steaks are relatively inexpensive, but don't expect your steak to match its North American counterpart. They're also lean (cattle is grass-fed). Despite 767 miles of coastline, seafood — especially shrimp (camarones) or lobster (langosto) — is expensive, because Costa Rica exports most of its seafood. The variety of available fish is increasing. Most sea-side restaurants feature mahi mahi, snapper, seabass and tuna, prepared in a variety of ways. Trout and tilapia farms supply the whole country with inexpensive and tasty fresh water fish varieties. Other seafood dishes include shrimp, octopus, squid and clams. Ceviche prepared from many sources is available around the country. While seabass ceviche is the most popular, other varieties include shrimp, vuela a la vida cocktail (with a variety of seafood), green mango, green plantain.

Note: If you have food allergies or are on a special/restricted diet, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:
www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide

SHOPPING

An impressive selection of handcrafts is produced in Costa Rica. The tropical hardwoods found in the country's forests are carved into a variety of items ranging from wooden fruit to miniature oxcarts, and production of handicrafts is the most profitable use for those precious woods. Local artisans also produce some attractive jewelry, often integrating traditional indigenous designs and sometimes making exact replicas of museum pieces. Shoppers will also find

good prices on quality leather goods as well as on cheaper items such as T-shirts and Costa Rican coffee. Most large hotels have gift shops, and there are plenty of nice stores in most tourist towns. San Jose has a few craft shops in the area between the Plaza de la Cultura and the National Museum. Artisans sell their wares from a series of stalls on the Plaza de la Democracia. On the road to Cartago, in the town of Curridabat, east of San Jose, an extensive international market stocks plenty of goods from neighboring countries. The town of Moravia, 20 minutes north of San Jose, has a street of souvenir shops, and an hour northwest of the capital is the town of Sarchi, famous for its traditional hand-painted ox carts.

NOTE: Costa Ricans are very proud of their country and quite eager to share its natural heritage and culture with visitors. Costa Rican culture is reflected in obvious areas such as food, architecture, music, dance, folklore, fashion and in facets of everyday life. It is also reflected in the way people think, their attitudes towards work, time, problem-solving (Costa Ricans love to discuss an issue at great length) and even such mundane things as personal space. (As in some other countries, people tend to stand much closer together in lines that we are used to). It will just take some getting used to. One of the reasons people from North

America and Europe feel comfortable in Costa Rica is that the social structure is very similar to home and most people seem to enjoy a relatively comfortable lifestyle. The vast majority of Costa Ricans belong to a hard-working middle class that aspires to a North American, consumer-oriented way of life. First time visitors may be surprised, for example, at the number of international fast food chains in San José or the number of modern cars on the roads. In addition to eating out and driving a good car, a comfortable home with good furniture and appliances, clothes, sports and vacations are all very important to Costa Ricans. Like most everywhere else, there is poverty here, as well, but even the lowest income families have access to good education and health care so, unlike many developing countries, there is always the possibility of upward mobility in Costa Rica. Officially, Costa Rica is a Catholic country and all major Catholic festivities are observed. The country observes a mandatory dry law (no liqueur sold) on Good Thursday / Friday / Easter Sunday, and also the weekend before national elections. Most businesses and banks are closed on major holidays, including January 1, Easter Week, May 1 (Labor Day), April 11 (Juan Santamaria Day), July 25 (Guanacaste Day), August 2 (Virgen de Los Angeles), August 15 (Mother's Day), September 15 (Independence Day) and Christmas.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides are produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Barnes and Noble, www.barnesandnoble.com, and Longitude Books, www.longitudebooks.com, have collections of books, searchable by country.

TRAVELLER'S WILDLIFE GUIDES: COSTA RICA

Les D. Beletsky, David Beadle (Illustrator), Priscilla Barrett (Illustrator)

Most travelers to Costa Rica want to experience its lush tropical forests and catch glimpses of exotic wildlife; toucans and parrots, hummingbirds and hawks, monkeys and big cats, frogs and toads, crocodiles, and (yes) snakes. Here is all the information you will need to find, identify and learn about Costa Rica's magnificent wildlife. The author, himself a wildlife biologist and experienced eco-traveler, visited national parks, reserves, and other ecological sites, discussed wildlife with local and international experts and veteran tour leaders, and then selected, for new color illustrations, nearly 350 of Costa Rica's most common amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals—the species you are actually likely to see. Also pictured are some animals of special biological significance—for instance,

some highly endangered species. Easy-to-carry, entertainingly written, beautifully illustrated—you will want to have this book as constant companion on your journey.

MONKEYS ARE MADE OF CHOCOLATE: EXOTIC AND UNSEEN COSTA RICA

Jack Ewing, Foreword by Daniel Quinn

Discover the mysterious and fascinating ways in which animals and plants - and people - interact with one another in the rainforests of Costa Rica, home to some of the most prolific and diverse ecosystems on Earth. More than just a simple collection of essays, *Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate* is a testament to the wonder of life in all its countless guises, as seen through the eyes of a man with a gift for subtle discernment and a natural flair for storytelling.

THE COSTA RICA READER: HISTORY, CULTURE, POLITICS

Steven Paul Palmer (Editor), Ivan Molina (Editor)

This essential introduction to Costa Rica includes more than fifty texts related to the country's history, culture, politics, and natural environment. Most of these newspaper accounts, histories, petitions, memoirs, poems, and essays are written by Costa Ricans. Many appear here in English for the first time. The authors are men and women, young and old, scholars, farmers, workers, and activists. The Costa Rica Reader presents a panoply of voices: eloquent working-class raconteurs from San Jose's poorest barrios, English-speaking Afro-Antilleans of the Limon province, Nicaraguan immigrants, factory workers, dissident members of the intelligentsia, and indigenous people struggling to preserve their culture. With more than forty images, the collection showcases sculptures, photographs, maps, cartoons, and fliers. From the time before the arrival of the Spanish, through the rise of the coffee plantations and the Civil War of 1948, up to participation in today's global world, Costa Rica's remarkable history comes alive.

100 CATERPILLARS: PORTRAITS FROM THE TROPICAL FORESTS OF COSTA RICA

Winifred Hallwachs, Daniel H. Janzen, Jeffrey C. Miller

Every bright monarch butterfly or striking luna moth started out in a far subtler form of nature's mosaic, a humble caterpillar. It is this early stage of life--crafted by natural selection into machines for converting a vast array of plant matter, mostly leaves, into the beautiful adults that have captivated humans for millennia--that this book brings to dazzling light. Unobtrusive as they go about their business, these caterpillars are rarely seen by humans--and are virtually never seen from the perspective presented in this sumptuous volume: photographed in extreme close-ups at a resolution that captures in sharp detail the exquisite colors and features eluding the casual observer. Gathered by biologists Daniel Janzen, Winifred Hallwachs, and Jeffrey Miller in the tropical dry forests, cloud forests, and rain forests of northwestern Costa Rica, over 100 large-format photographs of caterpillars document the dizzying variety of shapes, vivid colors, and cryptic markings among these species. The pictures are accompanied by capsule species accounts--revealing life histories as diverse as their forms--and magnificent images of the adult butterfly or moth. The story of the caterpillars is also the success story of Area de Conservacion Guanacaste--where the long-term work of Janzen and Hallwachs, and their team, along with the participation of neighboring farming communities, has deepened understanding of Costa Rica's Lepidoptera and has brought about advances in restoration ecology of

tropical habitats, biodiversity prospecting, and ecotourism development.

COBBLE CIRCLES AND STANDING STONES: ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE RIVAS SITE, COSTA RICA

Jeffrey Quilter

In this first-person tale of archaeological adventure in the tropical forest, Jeffrey Quilter tells the story of his excavation of Rivas, a great ceremonial center at the foot of the Costa Rican Talamanca Mountain range, which flourished between A.D. 900 and 1300, and its fabled gold-filled cemetery, the Panteon de la Reina. The only book in English that focuses on a single archaeological site in Costa Rica, a place that continues to develop as a destination for archaeological tourism, Cobble Circles and Standing Stones will appeal to laypeople and professionals alike. Because of its focus on the ways in which research was carried out, the book will be useful in classes on archaeological method and technique.

GREEN PHOENIX: RESTORING THE TROPICAL FORESTS OF GUANACASTE, COSTA RICA

William Allen, Samantha Burton (Illustrator)

A vividly written account of one of the great environmental success stories of our time. Can we prevent the destruction of the world's tropical forests? In the fire-scarred hills of Costa Rica, award-winning science writer William Allen found a remarkable answer: we can not only prevent their destruction -- we can bring them back to their former glory. Allen tells the gripping story of a large group of Costa Rican and American scientists and volunteers who set out to save the tropical forests in the northwestern section of the country. It was an area badly damaged by the fires of ranchers and small farmers; in many places a few strands of forest strung across a charred landscape. Despite the widely held belief that tropical forests, once lost, are lost forever, the team led by the dynamic Daniel Janzen from the University of Pennsylvania moved relentlessly ahead, taking a broad array of political, ecological, and social steps necessary for restoration. They began with 39 square miles and, by 2,000, they had stitched together and revived some 463 square miles of land and another 290 of marine area. Today this region is known as the Guanacaste Conservation Area, a fabulously rich landscape of dry forest, cloud forest, and rain forest that gives life to some 235,000 species of plants and animals. It may be the greatest environmental success of our time, a prime example of how extensive devastation can be halted and reversed.