

Life in Costa Rica

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Costa Rica is located in Central America. The country's size is small (51,100 sq km) and it covers only 0.03 % of the surface of the globe. Nevertheless, it proudly shelters a 6% of the existing biodiversity in the entire world; 25% of the country is composed of conservation and natural protected territory.

Costa Rica is also an attractive country for investment and it offers great potential for the establishment of important multinational companies, thanks to the outstanding academic level of its population, as well as the high standard of modern services and social and political stability.

Costa Rica takes pride in having more than one hundred years of democratic tradition, and almost half a century without an army. The army was abolished in 1948, and the money the country saves by not expending in military issues is invested in improving the standard of living, which has fostered a culture of social peace that makes it such a pleasant place to visit.

Climate

The climate in Costa Rica is very pleasant not only during the dry season, which extends from December to April but also during the rainy season, which runs from May to November.

Costa Rica has a tropical climate with an average temperature of 22°C (72° F) that increases considerably on the coastal areas.

Government

The political system is represented by three powers, which are: The Executive Power, the Legislative Power and the Judicial Power. The Elections Supreme Court is considered the fourth power of the Republic. Every four years, national elections are carried out. Among other positions of popular representation, the President of the Republic is elected through direct representation by secret ballot.

Medical Services

Costa Rica has positioned itself among the countries with the highest public healthcare development in Latin America.

The Costa Rican Social Security Service (CCSS) is a public service institution that has accomplished important goals regarding health issues, including pensions and social security.

The country also has a strong private health system, with hospitals and clinics of great prestige and reputation.

Housing

The best housing areas are found within the Greater Metropolitan Area. Apartment rentals start at US\$600 and can reach \$5,000 for high-end housing (monthly). These latter are usually located within a gated community and include fees for gardeners and security personnel. On the coastal areas, especially the Northern Pacific Region, luxurious villas start at \$250,000 (selling price).

There are little real estate restrictions for foreigners; the Law ensures the same rights for foreigners as for citizens, which means that there are no special conditions for the acquisition of properties in the country.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2008), San José ranks fourth among the cities in Latin America with the best quality of life.

City/Country	Rank
Vancouver, Canada	1
Minneapolis, US	42
San Francisco, US	53
New York, US	56
Buenos Aires, Argentina	61
Santiago, Chile	64
Montevideo, Uruguay	66
San Juan, Puerto Rico	70
San José, Costa Rica	72
Shanghai, China	84
Panama City, Panama	88
Sao Paulo, Brazil	92
Mexico City, Mexico	105
New Delhi, India	114

Schools

There are around 9,400 educational institutions in Costa Rica. The number has been growing for several years, complying with the growth in demand.

Our educational system is ranked 32nd in the world, the highest in Latin America, according to the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report 2008-2009. The public schooling system is universal, free, and compulsory for Costa Rican citizens.

There are also many private schools that are bilingual (English, German, French or Hebrew), and offer worldwide recognized programs such as the Advances Placement (AP) and the International Baccalaureate (IB). In addition, most of them have been internationally certified by the Southern Association of Schools (SACS), New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), or the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA).

There are over 200 private schools registered at the Ministry of Education, 7 of which are internationally certified:

<i>School</i>	<i>Certifying Organization</i>
<i>American International School</i>	<i>SACS</i>
<i>Blue Valley School</i>	<i>NEASC</i>
<i>British School</i>	<i>NEASC</i>
<i>Country Day School</i>	<i>MSA</i>
<i>Lincoln School</i>	<i>SAC</i>
<i>Marian Baker School</i>	<i>SACS</i>
<i>Pan-American School</i>	<i>NEASC</i>

SACS – Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
NEASC New England Association of Schools and Colleges
MSA – Middle Status Association of Colleges and Schools

Other recognized schools are Humboldt School (which offers English and German recognized by the German Government), Franco Institute (bilingual program in French

with recognition from the Government of France) and Weizman School (Hebrew and English).