

Trip Tips from Tom and Beryl

In August 2006, our family went to Costa Rica. We'd like to share some of the highlights of our trip.

We took our 15 year-old daughter and her friend, also 15 years old, and spent 10 days exploring and playing in Costa Rica.

We began our trip by landing at Daniel Oduber Airport in Liberia, Guanacaste on the North Pacific coast. It was a brief 15-minute drive to the beach area of Playa Panama.

The first day as we were soaking up some sun, we connected with a local boatman named Adolfo who took us out on his boat, just the four of us! Adolfo had grown up in these waters, and he snorkeled with us. He reached into underwater nooks and crannies to show us the most delightful creatures. He even held a puffer fish in his hand while the girls petted it!

The next day we rented jet skis and laughed ourselves silly as we allowed the teens to drive us full speed ahead round and round in the bay. The water was incredibly calm and beautiful, when they slowed down enough for us to see!

Another day we drove to Buena Vista Adventure Park. This park had many different activities to do all in the same place. We went on a canopy tour, which involved zip lining from cables in the treetops through the jungle! Beryl, (mom) who was petrified of heights prior to this adventure, fell in love with it, and wanted to go again and again.

At this same park, we rushed down a mountain stream water slide – What a THRILL! Then we rode on horseback to a hot springs area and soaked and soaked in the mountain's hot water. There was natural clay mud that was heated and we all covered ourselves in the clay, making our skin smooth as a baby. Along the way we met a coate, which is an adorable little creature that looked like a cross between a cat and a squirrel. He sat on our shoulders and snuggled with the girls. They didn't want to let him go. A tractor drove us back up from the hot springs. By that time we were tired and ready for a great meal, which was also provided as part of the package. All in all, a great day!

Another day we went exploring some other beaches, and on the way we found fresh fruit vendors on the side of the road, monocongos (howler monkeys) swinging from the trees, and sloths just hanging out. We inexpensively rented surfboards for a few hours at one of the beaches, and attempted to become instant surfers with mixed results. A beachside restaurant made our mouths water with delicious fresh food.

On yet another day, we drove to Barra Honda state park. We had lunch with an extended family of iguanas and then, with two guides encouraging us the whole way, hiked to the most amazing caverns! We learned some Spanish and enjoyed the good nature of our Tico (Costa Rican), guides, while they laughed at our attempts at Spanish. It was a true

joy to go to La Dolce Vita in Playa Coco and eat a most scrumptious Italian meal after another day of jungle adventure.

We took an exquisite hike downhill (and up) to La Fortuna Waterfall. The hike took us down and down and down into an amazingly picturesque canyon and the brave of spirit – all of us- took a refreshing swim!

For the last 3 days of our journey, we went to Arenal (approximately four hours away) to view the live active volcano and surrounding area. We stayed at the Arenal Lodge and from the deck each evening we watched as red-hot lava came down the mountainside! One night, there was loud rumbling and everyone ran outside during dinner to watch the lava flow.

In that same area, there are several hot spring parks with the water being heated from the volcanic activity. We chose a smaller hot springs park, called Aqua Thermales. It was less expensive, less crowded and thoroughly enjoyable! We spent hours and hours going from pool to pool in this lush forest setting. Tabacon and Baldi are two of the other hot springs nearby for those interested in something fancier.

On our final day in the Arenal area, we took a river-rafting trip on the Sarapiquí River. Now that was a blast! The food was delicious, the scenery spectacular, and jumping off the cliffs was just one of the many highlights of that day.

We thoroughly enjoyed our first visit to Costa Rica so much so, we decided to make a condo purchase to ensure that we and many others would be able to have a tremendous Costa Rican vacation. This Country has something to offer for everyone, and we suggest VisitCostaRica.com to ensure your Costa Rica vacation is just what you'd like it to be, and enjoy every minute like we did!

Tom and Beryl, with contributions from Sami, and Lena.