TOUR CODE

01C

ADVENTURESABROAD

COSTA RICA FAMILY TOUR

Volcanoes & Cloud Forest

10 days

Updated 29/04/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in San Jose*

Today we arrive in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Overnight in San Jose. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *San Jose: INBio Parque*

We have a morning departure to INBio Parque, an educational and recreational centre where visitors are exposed to samples of the vast world of biological diversity that can be found in Costa Rica. We visit the biodiversity centre, and the projection room in the company of an expert guide. We then walk one of the three interpretive trails, an excellent introduction to the country's natural marvels.

Overnight San Jose. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *San Jose - Arenal*

Today we stop at Sarchi, a village renowned for its colourful oxcarts and wooden handicrafts. We travel through rolling hills covered with sugar cane fields to overnight near Arenal Volcano. The volcano's regular eruptions and lava flow can be heard and seen in the night sky from afar on a clear night. We make a stop at the Baldi Hotsprings (located near Arenal and outside the Risk Zones established by the National Prevention of Risks and Emergency Commission). Here a geothermally-heated river flows through beautifully landscaped grounds featuring many plant and tree species and great birdlife. We will have time to relax in or around the various pools (bring a towel). The springs feature ten hot pools with different temperatures fed by individual springs and two swim-up bars.

This evening we make an excursion to see Arenal's perfect conical shape with glowing red lava flowing down its slopes (weather permitting).

Overnight in Arenal / La Fortuna area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Arenal: Horseback Excursion*

This morning we embark on a 2-hour easy horseback ride through the forests and hills near Arenal Volcano. Your leader will provide expert guidance with plenty of information on the plants and animals that live in the trees and underbrush. Bring your binoculars as birdwatching can be particularly interesting.

This afternoon you may elect to follow your Tour Leader on a lava walk, a hike in the rain forest, or a visit to Arenal Waterfalls.

Overnight in Arenal / La Fortuna Area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Arenal - Monteverde Cloud Forest*

Today we travel through a rustic rural countryside to the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve area (+/- 4 hours).

Covered in a mantle of moss, ferns and orchids, this private reserve is home to over 400 species of birds and a great number of animals. The forest is created by the winds, particular temperature and moisture conditions, and mountainous topography which combine during the dry season to hold a steady cloud cover along the continental divide. The rains and the moisture in the air nourish trees and plants rooted in the ground, as well as many plants that live at the upper levels of the forest, and take their nutrients directly from the mist and dust that pass through the air. The result is an enchanted fairy-tale environment where trees are laden with orchids, bromeliads, mosses and ferns that obscure their branches, where the moisture and mild temperatures and sunlight filtered by the forest canopy encourage the exuberance of begonias, heliconias, philodendron and many other tropical plants in every available space on the ground.

This afternoon we have a guided tour of the "Butterfly Garden" where butterflies and other endemic insects are raised and protected in a controlled environment allowing scientists to study them -- their place in the food chain and their response to things like increased pollution and climate change.

Overnight at Monteverde. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Monteverde Cloud Forest*

We have a full morning exploring the cloud forest reserve with the help of a local naturalist guide. There is more to the forest than the trees and lesser plants. Of over 320 bird species, the most notable is the quetzal with its long arc of tail feathers. Assorted trogons in addition to the quetzal inhabit the reserve, along with more than 50 varieties of hummingbird. About 500 kinds of butterfly are found at Monteverde. Among the more than 100 mammalian species are howler, white-faced and spider monkeys, coatis and their cousins, raccoons; as well as the rarely observed pumas, ocelots, jaguars, tapirs, and kinkajous.

This afternoon you may choose to go on an optional "Canopy Walk" excursion, located within the cloud forest. Suspension foot-bridges are strung across deep gorges allowing one to get a bird's eye view of the forest from a totally different perspective than we experienced this morning. At a leisurely pace, one can complete this easy and fascinating walk in about 90 minutes. Your Tour Leader can help you plan this activity (optional cost approx $25-40, subject to change).

REMEMBER: This can be a wet and windy place by definition. You should be prepared for varied conditions.

Overnight at Monteverde. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Monteverde - Quepos*

Today we travel to Quepos, the gateway to Manuel Antonio National Park, an unspoiled haven of natural beauty on the shores of the Pacific.

Overnight in Quepos area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Manuel Antonio National Park*

This morning we enjoy a leisurely walk through part of Manuel Antonio Park. While strolling the forest trails and the white sand beaches, we'll encounter monkeys, iguanas, sea creatures and bird life of infinite variety. After our morning walk, we will have time to relax on one of the park's beautiful beaches before returning to our hotel around lunch time.

Manuel Antonio National Park is an area of sand curving around a bay strewn with islands of rock, and shaded by green bordering forests. All are backdropped by dramatic cliffs. Manuel Antonio beach is one of the few places in Costa Rica where unspoiled primary forest grows right to the high-tide mark, allowing visitors to bathe at times in the shade.

South Espadilla is the northernmost of the park's beaches, followed by calmer Manuel Antonio beach, offshore of which are some coral spots. Third Beach has tidal pools where brightly coloured fish and eels are temporarily stranded. Last is Puerto Escondido, access to which is made difficult by the bordering rocky promontory.

Some of the most frequently observed animals at Manuel Antonio are marmoset--the smallest of Costa Rican monkeys--white-faced and howler monkeys, racoons, pacas, opossums, and two- and three-toed sloths. Easily sighted seabirds include frigate birds, pelicans, terns, and brown boobies. A network of trails winds along the sea and through the forest.

Overnight in Quepos area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Quepos - San Jose*

Today we travel back to San Jose after a leisurely morning. Upon arrival in San Jose we'll visit the famous Gold Museum.

Overnight in San Jose. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Departure*

Departure from San Jose.

BUEN VIAJE! Meal plan: Breakfast.