

- [Home](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Meet Mary](#)
- [Mary's Favorites](#)
- [Endorsements](#)
- [Contributors](#)
- [Annual Events and Destinations](#)

- [RSS](#)

ADVENTURES IN COSTA RICA

Text and most photos by Contributor Yvette Cardozo



It was ... well ... the leather diaper that did it. I knew at that moment, Costa Rica was going to be memorable.

Swooshing down a 1,600 foot concrete slide in a monster gush of water, balanced on a triangle of leather, was not THE highlight of the day. It was only one of the highlights. I had never thought of Costa Rica as an adventure travel trip but it is that and so much more the culture, the beaches, the hot springs, the volcanoes.

But first, the adventure.

It started, really, the day before in Tamarindo on Costa Rica's Pacific coast. This being the very end of the rainy season, we had a bit of extra excitement on our ATV tour.

From town, we headed into the woods and down a muddy trail that had been turned into a mini Grand Canyon by months of eroding rain.

I could envision what would happen if I misjudged things and tipped into one of those ditches. But I didn't. Nor did any of my friends. Riding an ATV through the mud is a lot like riding a snowmobile ... same body moves, same balance. Only on a snowmobile, you've got a lot more padding.



And this tour was far more than just adrenaline. Eli, our guide, would stop often. Here, he pointed out a guanacaste tree with a six foot trunk. There he picked up a tiny crab claw, or seeds used for jewelry.

And then there were the termites. Eli walked over to a large mud ball attached to a tree and stuck his hand right against the mound. Dozens of orange termites obligingly swarmed onto his fingers.

“Good for bug repellent,” he said, rubbing the insects across his arm. Indeed, they smelled a bit like citronella.

“And good for food.”



Well, they're a bit salty and crunchy but it would take half a mound to make supper.

We wound back on decidedly more benign trails, through thick leafy green with the tang of wild oranges in the air.

The next day was ‘combo’ day ... truly aimed at folks with short attention spans who want it ALL, virtually at the same moment.

First, the zip lines, though here at Buena Vista at the foot of Rincon de la Vieja Volcano, they prefer to call it a “canopy tour.” And that’s fair. This is not aimed at adrenaline junkies. Rather, it is a calm, beautiful, totally safe and controlled journey via 11 lines through and over the thick jungle. At one point, swooping over the trees, we could see the ocean. It was, honestly, the most gentle zip tour I’ve ever done ... no twirling, no upside down, no tricks. Rather, it’s all about the scenery and the flight.

Then, to the waterslide. It’s a narrow, 1,600 foot long concrete flume that winds through the forest. And like the canopy tour, it’s a journey ... past trees, under bridges and through a tunnel. You start slow but midway, you get slammed with a push of water. And the race is on as you bounce over small dips, careen around sharp turns and hang on gloriously for dear life. Yes, the water is cold, though here they insist on calling it refreshing. Just remember your pacemaker.



And the leather diaper? That’s for women in bathing suits. It kept us from scraping our tender bottoms on the concrete chute.

At this point, the day was far from over. After lunch, you get on horses for an hour ride to the hot springs.

“A gentle path?” I asked.

“Not too bad.”

Which was true at first. And then we cut from the road into the jungle, crossing streams, climbing over logs and small boulders. But hey, I figured the horse knew what he was doing. I just relaxed the reins and let him go. And eventually, after several heart stopping bounces downward, we arrived at a rustic spring with several pools and vats of hot mud. They bring the mud from the nearest volcano and keep it heated in basins. The stuff is slick and gray and dries into a fine light shade that made us all look like ghosts.



The mud was glorious. The volcano heated water was fabulous. We ended the tour floating on our backs and peering at the sky through the canopy while people far above zinged past on a zipline.

The next day was rest ... a wonderful massage at our hotel, the Flamingo Beach Resort, a scuba dive in the afternoon and a chance to learn more about Costa Rica.

A quarter of this country the size of West Virginia is protected in national parks or reserves ... a larger proportion of its land than any other nation in the world.

Meanwhile, Costa Rica has become a world leader in ecotourism. Today, there are 186 preserved areas which also include that other famous feature of Costa Rica: volcanoes. Four tectonic plates meet beneath Costa Rica's forests. The result is spectacular with eight active volcanoes and at least one that erupts continuously.

Oh yes, by the way, Costa Rica is the first (the only?) country to constitutionally abolish its army.



Besides the waterslides, the ziplines (just about every hotel and resort seems to have one), the volcano visits and hot springs there are places where you can watch butterflies emerge from their cocoons, where natives who still live in thatch huts will tell you about their culture, where you can wander the jungle to sniff the spices and photograph the exotic flowers.

Before taking off on our final day of adventure, I went down to the beach.

It really is perfect. The water is not heat stroke warm but not too cold, either. The waves are just interesting enough to be fun without being intimidating for the kids.



There are enough people so you don't feel deserted but not so many that you feel crushed by the bodies. And nobody's trying to sell you trinkets, either. That's in town, where you can wander the hanging tropical towels, the carved wood plates, the shell necklaces and all the other goodies that make great gifts.

Sunset was, honestly, also perfect. The sky and sand glowed hot pink and I watched a local couple hold hands and gently slide into the water.

The next day, our last, was the trip to THE hot springs. And of course, also the volcano.

Along the way ... an unexpected treat. We stopped at a tourist shop and I bought some ice cream. Not just any old ice cream but the best stuff I've tasted since, well, I can't remember when. This particular brand was Dos Pinas from the Monte Verde region but around here if it's homemade, you can't go wrong. Especially with coffee flavor.



At a place simply called Eco Lodge Hotel, we went for a short rain forest hike where our guide Gustavo pointed out, among other things, a spider that spins silk 10 times stronger than iron and a coffee tree that was 70 feet tall.

Half way through the hike, we ducked into a grass hut where a local Inca, a member of the Maleku tribe, talked about how his people were trying to preserve their culture. There is so little contact with the outside

that when this man returns to his village, a three hour hike into the jungle, he will be quarantined for five days to make sure he doesn't infect anyone else in the tribe.

And then we were off to more hot springs.

This last one, Tabacon Thermal Resort, was incredible ... the Garden of Eden with teak lawn chairs. There were 14 pools connected by bridges and stone paths and surrounded by waterfalls, palms, ferns, bromeliads and so many other flowers I could hardly keep count. Once again we lay belly up, floating in warm water while toucans flew past and something ... I don't know what ... whistled in the distance.



Finally, after dinner and sunset, we went hunting for the volcano.

Arenal erupts continuously. But not violently. Not often, anyway. Mostly, the cone just burps hot rocks, sometimes spewing sparks like a giant roman candle.

We stood there in the dark, listening to the rumble and watching as red hot boulders left a fiery trail down the slopes. Nature on display... a perfect end to our trip.

WHERE WHEN & HOW

The absolute best time to visit Costa Rica is November and December, the beginning of the dry season when everything is still green. The dry season runs November through April.

Though the country is only 10 degrees north of the Equator, the temperature, especially in the mountains, is refreshingly cool.



Reasonably priced hotels dot the landscape but for a good

combination of comfort and a bit of elegance that stays within a budget, try the Flamingo Beach Resort near Tamarindo towards the north end of the country on the Pacific Coast.

Do not miss a combo adventure tour. And do not miss a chance to try local food, especially Nivanna in Tamarindo for it's killer tuna sashimi (they call it tuna tartare) and in Flamingo Beach, the Golden Shrimp, where you sit at simple tables on the beach eating absolutely the best grilled lobster on earth.

Contact:

Costa Rica: www.visitcostarica.com

Flamingo Beach Resort: www.resortflamingobeach.com

Buena Vista Lodge and Adventure: www.buenavistalodgecr.com

This entry was written by [Yvette](#), posted on November 3, 2009 at 11:55 am, filed under [Guest Contributor](#), [Yvette Cardozo](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#). Follow any comments here with the [RSS feed for this post](#). Post a [comment](#) or leave a [trackback](#).
[« previous post](#) [next post »](#)

Leave a Comment

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.

Search peachin.com content

Search for:

- [Register](#)
- [Log in](#)

Archives

Select Category 

Pages

- [Newsletters](#)
 - [Newsletter Photo Gallery](#)
- [Meet Mary](#)
 - [“Step aside, Indiana Jones...”](#)
 - [A Tucson Superwoman](#)
 - [Freelance](#)
 - [Freelance Photo Gallery](#)
 - [Living Life on the Edge](#)
 - [She's Hooked on Adventure](#)
- [Mary's Favorites](#)

- [Guides](#)
- [Inns and Ranches](#)
- [Resorts](#)
- [Restaurants](#)
- [Spa Signatures](#)
- [Endorsements](#)
 - [Products](#)
 - [Books](#)
- [Contributors](#)
 - [Journalists](#)
 - [Photojournalists](#)
 - [David Lovitt](#)
 - [Doug Olander](#)
 - [Mary L. Peachin](#)
 - [William Kimball](#)
 - [Yvette Cardozo](#)
- [Annual Events and Destinations](#)
- [About peachin.com](#)
 - [Privacy Policy](#)

Adventure Travel Companies

Langara Fishing



[Langara Fishing Adventures](#)



[Frontiers North Adventures](#)

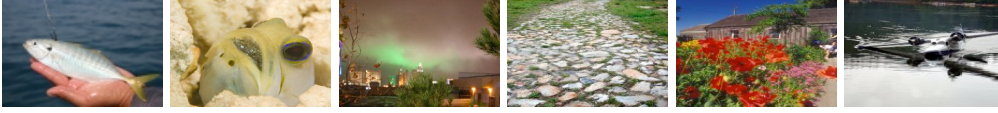


[Austin Lehman Adventures](#)

Our Favorite Sites

- [Sport Fishing Magazine](#)
- [undercurrent](#)

Random Gallery Pictures



Login/Register

- [Register](#)

Username:

Password:

[Log In](#)

Copyright © 2010 [Peachin & Peachin](#). Powered by [WordPress](#) and [dkret3](#). | [Log in](#)