Costa Rica is a tropical treasure awaiting discovery. The region’s natural beauty comes alive as we explore the parks framed by turquoise waters, crystalline rivers, volcanoes, rainforests, and cloud forests. Opportunities abound to seek out the numerous species of birds, mammals, and marine life that make these environments their home. Learn from local biologists about sea turtle conservation and see their nests on a special nighttime walking tour. Enjoy a cooking class, hike trails and hanging bridges in the rainforests and cloud forests, experience the nocturnal sounds of the rainforest, and raft down the Sarapiqui River.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Explore the winding rivers of Tortuguero National Park looking for three toed sloths, three species of monkeys and 320 species of birds.

- Visit the Sea Turtle Conservation Museum and go on an evening turtle nesting tour.

- Raft down Class II/III rapids on the Sarapiqui River.

- Take a cooking class and learn about organic farming in the tropics.

- Explore the various canopies of the rainforest on trails and hanging bridges near Arenal Volcano. Nighttime walks to experience the nocturnal sounds of both the rainforest and cloud forest.

- Spend two days at Monteverde’s complex ecosystem, perched atop the continental divide and sustained by moist clouds and fog. Monteverde supports more than 100 species of mammals, 400 species of birds, tens of thousands of insect species, and at least 2,500 varieties of plants, 420 of which are orchids.

- Experience the Bat Jungle, promoting public awareness of the ecological importance of bats, thereby helping to conserve bat populations throughout the world.

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:** Level 3
THURSDAY, DEC 26
DEPART FROM HOME CITY / ARRIVE SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

Depart U.S. and fly to San Jose, Costa Rica. Transfer to the Bougainvillea Hotel, located in the hills of historic Heredia, a small town in the Central Valley just 15 minutes north of San José. Gather for a welcome reception and dinner.

Overnight at Bougainvillea Hotel (R, D)

FRIDAY, DEC 27
TORTUGUERO

Travel by coach and boat to Tortuguero, along Costa Rica’s northeast coast. Tortuguero’s beaches are the most important nesting site for Green Sea Turtles in the western Caribbean. Visit the Sea Turtle Conservation Museum, then check into the Aninga Lodge. Most of the hotel is constructed five feet above the ground with buildings on stilts and raised walkways to protect the natural habitat for animals and give guests panoramic views of the tropical rainforest. The lodge also built its own water treatment plant to prevent contamination of the fragile ecosystem. After dinner, take a special nighttime sea turtle nesting walk.

Overnight at Aninga Lodge (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, DEC 28
TORTUGUERO

Spend the day exploring Tortuguero’s calm, forest-lined rivers and man-made channels by small boat. Look for monkeys, sloths, iguanas, caiman, turtles, and an abundance of colorful tropical birds. This afternoon, learn about sea turtle nesting with a local biologist.

Overnight at Aninga Lodge (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, DEC 29
SARAPIQUI RIVER / ARENAL

Transfer to the Sarapiquí River for a fun-filled rafting experience through the lowland rainforest of Costa Rica’s northern zone, where exotic birds, such as the sun bittern, keel billed toucan and the endangered great green macaw are still spotted. The Sarapiquí is a class II river (appropriate for kids 6 and older), with calm pools following each of its rapids. On the river’s edge is a private farm producing ornamental plants, and a delicious lunch with plenty of fresh fruit. Continue to the Tilajari Hotel by Arenal National Park, featuring thermal springs, lush gardens, nature paths, and panoramic volcano and mountain views.

Overnight at Tilajari Hotel (B, L, D)

MONDAY, DEC 30
ARENAL

Explore the canopies of the rainforest on interpretive trails and 15 hanging bridges near Arenal Volcano. Continue to a cooking class with lunch and an appreciation of organic farming and the traditional country life of this rural area. In the evening, take a night walk revealing the wonders of the region’s nocturnal animals.

Overnight at Tilajari Hotel (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, DEC 31
MONTEVERDE

Take a boat ride across Lake Arenal, which attracts many species of resident and migratory birds to the verdant hills along its banks. Mammals such as the playful coatimundi can occasionally be seen along with views of the Arenal Volcano. Continue to the Monteverde Cloud Forest and the El Establo Hotel, featuring spectacular views of the Monteverde mountains, the coastal plains, and Nicoya Gulf.

Overnight Pending (B, L, D)
WEDNESDAY, JAN 1
MONTEVERDE

Start the new year choosing between two options: a scenic Sky Tram & ziplining or a visit to the Bat Jungle. The Sky Tram will lead you up to the Continental Divide, with short stops to observe the cloud forest biodiversity and panoramic views. Optional ziplining between five observation towers is also included.

Or, visit the Bat Jungle for a guided walk into the world of bats. Watch the bats and bat feeders from a “Bat Habitat”, which is a separate glass enclosed viewing area. The Bat Jungle’s mission is to promote public awareness of the ecological importance of bats, thereby helping to conserve bat populations throughout the world.

Spend the afternoon at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve and its easy trails through some of the most beautiful primary cloud forests in the world. Often shrouded in cloud blown in from the Atlantic Ocean, the forests of Monteverde are laden with epiphytic growth such as mosses, lichens, ferns, bromeliads, orchids—even small trees! Famous for its populations of Resplendent Quetzal, Monteverde has almost become synonymous with this legendary bird. Other cloud forest denizens include the Black-faced Solitaire, Golden-browed Chlorophonia and Black Guan.

This evening, celebrate your journey with a special farewell dinner.

Overnight Pending (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, JAN 2
DEPARTURES

Transfer to Liberia or San Jose airports for flights to the U.S. (B)