Costa Rica Hiking, Mindfulness and Yoga
February 3-11, 2024
Trip #2420

(Photo From Verdesana Lodge Facebook Page)

Trip Overview
Join us for a 9-day Costa Rica hiking adventure, at a moderate pace, interwoven with practices that promote mindful engagement with the natural world and restorative yoga. We will spend the first half of the trip in an eco-lodge in Palo Verde, located in the mountainous cloud forest of Central Costa Rica. We will hike in high-altitude mountains, lush cloud forests and through villages along two legs of the Camino de Costa Rica. We will then travel to an eco-lodge in Uvita, a small mountain village on the Pacific coast, famous for its beautiful beaches and jungle. Here we will hike in the coastal beauty of the Parque Nacional Marino Ballena. We will be accompanied on each hike by a certified Costa Rican naturalist. Each day, after returning to our tranquil lodging, we will enjoy wellness opportunities including yoga and forest bathing and be treated to delicious, nourishing local cuisine.
Natural wonders abound in Costa Rica, and we will be guided in bird watching one morning, and spend a half-day snorkeling on Cano Island, a marine park filled with dolphins, sharks and even whales! We will have some cultural immersion through a local cooking lesson, interactions with our local guides, an optional walking tour of the coastal town of Uvita, and a “closing ceremony” performed by an indigenous healer.

Our trip will begin and end in the capital city of San Jose.

Neither yoga nor snorkeling experience is necessary, however anyone who plans to snorkel should know how to swim.

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Trip Difficulty
This Trip is rated moderate
AMC Trip Rating

Daily hikes will average 6-7 miles, at a moderate pace, with elevation gains as much as 2,700’. One hike will be at high altitude (10,800’), and others will be in forested conditions with some challenging terrain. Participants should be in strong physical condition and be comfortable with potentially wet, slippery conditions and high altitude. No prior yoga or snorkeling experience is necessary.
Daily Itinerary

Leave the US on February 3rd or earlier to arrive by mid-afternoon in San Jose on Day 1.

Day 1 - Saturday, February 3 (-/-/D)

Participants will arrive in San Jose. On arrival, a local driver will welcome everyone at the airport for a transfer to the well-located Hotel Auténtico near Sabana Park (transfers are included for all participants, regardless of the arrival time). We will have a free afternoon to explore San Jose. We will then have a Welcome Happy Hour to meet our fellow adventurers and look at our itinerary. Then we will enjoy our first meal together.

Each day begins with an invitation to participate in a variety of mindfulness practices, followed by a delicious breakfast. At breakfast we will preview the day's hike and/or excursions. Throughout the day we will offer opportunities to deepen our awareness and connection with the natural world.

Day 2 - Sunday, February 4 (B/L/D)

After breakfast, we will have a private 1.5-hour transfer to the start of Stage 10 of the Camino de Costa Rica. The Camino de Costa Rica is a hiking route that runs 174 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean sea, between towns, paths, indigenous reserves, primary forests, and cloud forests. We will hike Stage 10 of the path, a 7.4 mile hike with 2,778’ elevation gain, begins in the town of Navarro de Muñeco and enters the Palo Verde Cloud Forest. Palo Verde is located at 5,741’ at its lowest point and 6,889’ at its highest. There are some technical sections of this hike which are muddy and slippery. We
will have beautiful views of the Cerro de la Muerte mountains and end our hike at the lovely Verdesana Lodge. We will spend the next 3 nights in the mountains surrounded by nature. Our luggage will be transferred from San Jose to the Lodge. We will settle into our surroundings and have a group dinner at our Lodge.

(Camino de Costa Rica- photos by Sumak Travel)

(Verdesana Lodge- photos by Verdesana Lodge)

Day 3 – Monday, February 5  (B/L /D)
After an early breakfast, we will hike Stage 11 of the Camino de Costa Rica, from Verdesana to Cerro Alto. This 5.6 mile route, with 2,503’ elevation gain, will be mostly on gravel rural roads. It should take 4 hours to complete, and offers great panoramic views of the mountains and the forest. Once in Cerro Alto, we will visit Cataratas La Gruta Bohemia, which boasts 3 beautiful waterfalls. We will have a picnic lunch. We will be transported back to Verdesana lodge to enjoy the lush surroundings, have a 1-hour restorative yoga session, and a group dinner.

Day 4 - Tuesday, February 6  (B/L/D)
Early in the morning we will be treated to a 1.5-hour bird-watching experience on the lodge property and surrounding mountains. The biodiversity is astounding, with approximately 115 species of birds, including the bell bird and the quetzal. We may also view orioles, green toucanets, various types of
hummingbirds (one of the main attractions in the area), chingolo, seedbed, white-fronted woodpecker, parakeet, cacique, mockingbird, tanagers, goldfinches and many others. This will be followed by breakfast. Lunch will be at the lodge. During the afternoon, participants will be invited to participate in mindfulness practices such as Forest Bathing, fostering a deeper connection with the natural world around us. We will have a 1-hour yoga session before dinner.

**Day 5- Wednesday, February 7 (B/L/D)**

After breakfast we will be driven to a 5-hour moderately paced hike which will be 6 miles and 2,000’ elevation gain. We will be hiking in an ecosystem called a paramo which is a unique highland area of shrubs and grasses that develops at altitudes higher than 9,840’. It is an ecosystem that develops unique flora and fauna at the summits. In Costa Rica, the páramo is located mainly along the Talamanca Mountain Range, especially Cerro de la Muerte, Chirripó, Kamuk, Buena Vista and Cerro Vueltas. This route will take us to the páramo at Cerro de la Muerte, at an altitude of 10,800’. We will discover an amazing variety of birds and plants that reside there.

(Paramo Hike - photos by Sumak Travel)

After the hike, we will have a 2.5-hour transfer to Manoas Lodge near Uvita on the Pacific Ocean. The eco-lodge is close to the Ballena Marine National Park, one of only two nationally-protected marine zones in the whole country. 4x4 vehicles will transport us to the remote lodge. There will be a restorative yoga session before dinner.

(Manoas Lodge - Photos by Manoas Lodge)
Day 6 - Thursday, February 8 (B/-/D)
After an early breakfast, we will be driven by the 4x4 vehicles to Uvita to embark on a Caño Island snorkeling half day-trip. The island is home to an amazing variety of marine life. This area is a protected marine park, where we will encounter both pelagic (open ocean) and reef fish. Our captain and guide will be ready to sail with us to Caño Island (approx. 1h 15m each way). This island excursion is an excellent opportunity to observe marine wildlife such as dolphins, sharks and perhaps whales. If one does not choose to snorkel, one can enjoy the boat excursion. Anyone who plans to snorkel must know how to swim.

(Cano Island Tour - photos by Sumak Travel)

We will have lunch at a local restaurant in Uvita after the tour (not included). Later that afternoon, we will enjoy a cooking class at the lodge with Artisan Organic Products & Services, a family business with more than 15 years of experience in the food industry. They are proud to be using local ingredients from organic farms which are environmentally sustainable. These farms provide clean, healthy, and premium quality products while protecting the rich lands and fertile soils. Dinner is included in the cooking class.

Day 7 - Friday, February 9th (B/-/D)
After breakfast, a local naturalist will accompany us on a 7.5 mile, moderate hike with 1,358 ‘ elevation gain. The Calle Unión, Fango, Bahia Bellena route begins close to our lodge and ends at the lovely Bahia Bellena beach. Our hike will take us by a small waterfall. Lunch will be on your own in Uvita. After enjoying time at the beach and in town, we will be transported back to our lodge for a Forest Bathing experience led by Don Paulino, an elder from the Brörán people in the nearby Térraba indigenous territory. After dinner, the group will participate in an indigenous closing ceremony held around a fire, led by Don Paulino. Besides his ancestral knowledge, Don Paulino is a certified guide in Forest Bathing Therapy

Day 8 - Saturday, February 10th (B/-/D)
The morning will be free for beach time and group mindfulness activities. We will have our final 1-hour yoga session. Lunch will be on your own in Uvita. We will have a 4-hour transfer to San José. We will
stay at Hotel Auténtico (or a different hotel). We will have a farewell dinner at a nearby restaurant (4-course meal of Costa Rican contemporary cuisine).

(Bahia Bellena Beach in Uvita - photos by Sumak Travel)

**Day 9 - Sunday, February 11th (B/-/-)**

After breakfast, we’ll be driven to the San José airport for flights back home.

**Accommodations, Meals and Transportation**

We will be staying in a 4-star hotel in San Jose and two different eco-lodges, all with double occupancy. (Single Supplements may be available for an additional charge) The eco lodges are in tranquil, remote settings. Verdesana Lodge is located in the mountains surrounded by nature. The Manoas Lodge is a beautiful sanctuary nestled in the jungle above the Pacific ocean. Both lodges have a focus on wellness and fresh, local cuisine. Transportation will be in a 24-seat air conditioned Toyota Coaster from February 3rd to 7th and on Feb 10th; in 4x4 vehicles on Feb 8th and 9th. 8 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 8 dinners are included.

**The Weather**

Costa Rica in February is quite warm. The highs are around 86 to 94 °F with lows only dropping a few degrees to 76 to 84 °F.

**Trip Price**

The AMC Member price is $3025. The non-member price is $3125. To join the AMC [click here](#). (2023 pricing $50 individual, $75 family)

**Price includes:** The price for this excursion is based on quotes or estimates obtained at the time the trip was submitted to the Adventure Travel Committee for approval. The final price of the trip will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and any currency fluctuations. If the trip’s financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases we incur, will be shared by trip
participants. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase. All Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis and refunds, if any, are issued after the trip's financial accounting is complete.

The trip fee includes the following:

- 8 nights lodging in 3-Star hotels. Double Occupancy. 2 nights in San Jose, 3 nights at Verdesana Lodge, 3 nights at Manoas Lodge.
- 8 breakfasts
- 8 dinners
- 4 lunches (including picnics on some hikes)
- Snorkeling excursion
- National park entrance fees
- Cooking class where we make our dinner
- Tips at hotels and restaurants. Also for our guides and drivers.
- All ground and luggage transportation
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance.

The trip does not include the following:

- Airfare (Estimate $750) to San Jose from major East coast cities. Leaders will provide guidance for booking air travel.
- 4 lunches
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Insurance for travel delay, interruption, cancellation, or for baggage loss.

While participant airfare is not included in the trip price, leaders may assist participants in making suitable reservations. At a minimum, participants will be told when and where they must join the group for the official start of the trip’s planned activities. Once your air tickets are purchased they are your responsibility – **do not make any non-refundable travel plans until told to do so by the leaders.**

Please be aware that, in accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing the leaders' costs. Beyond this, the leaders are not allowed to realize any profit from this excursion. The trip price also includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Adventure Travel excursions. The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If these possibilities concern you, individual travel insurance is recommended. More information about included emergency medical and evacuation insurance, as well as about optional and recommended travel insurance, will be provided to participants in their formal acceptance letters, which will be sent out when the trip has the required number of accepted applicants.

**Participant Expectations**

This is a group activity and we will be spending many, but not all, hours together. We expect that everyone will pitch in and contribute to helping each other have a great time.
Registration and Cancellation

To apply, you must complete and submit the application, which contains a confidential medical form, acknowledgement and assumption of risk and release form, and a Covid release form. See the link below for the Application.

There is a registration deposit of $1,000. The check should be made payable to AMC and sent to:

Lisa Graves
177 Hersey Hill Rd
Minot, ME 04258

You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited until the leaders have determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match.

The balance of $2025 (AMC Members) or $2125 (non AMC Members) is due by September 1, 2023. Deposit checks from waitlisted applicants will not be cashed until they confirm continued interest in joining the trip. All payments should be by check and payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The AMC Adventure Travel cancellation policy is based on the premise that your cancellation may not raise the cost to other participants or the leaders. After notification of acceptance, the minimum cancellation fee is $100. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead. Should the leaders be able to replace you with another acceptable participant, you may be charged a reduced penalty. This will generally not be determined until after the trip. Failure to make trip payment(s) in a timely manner will be considered a cancellation.

This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip. In the unlikely event that the trip is canceled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

What to Bring

A packing list will be provided in the first Trip Newsletter.

US dollars are widely accepted in Costa Rica. Bring smaller bills like $1, $5, $10 and $20 bills. The bills will need to be in good condition as they will not be accepted if they are ripped or torn. The larger the bill, the more perfect it needs to be. Bills larger than $20 are difficult and might have to be changed at a bank. You will most likely receive your change in the local currency: colones.

To apply for the trip, click here for online application.
Terms, Conditions and General Information

Please carefully read the Adventure Travel Standard Terms and Conditions

Trip Leadership

Sue Christopherson
Sue is a psychologist who has led Mindfulness- based retreats in wilderness settings. As an avid hiker and cyclist, she has traveled throughout Europe and the US. She led many friend groups on outdoor adventures in Midcoast Maine. She began leading weekend trips in New England with the Boston Chapter of the AMC in 2019, and looks forward to leading Adventure Travel Trips in the US and abroad. She has a grown son and lives with her husband Chuck on the North Shore of MA.

Lisa Graves
Lisa has been leading adventure travel trips with the AMC since 2014 in Italy, Japan, Switzerland and Morocco. She regularly hikes, cycles, skis and kayaks. Combining her passions for travel, the outdoors and mindfulness, she is currently studying at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health to be certified in the School of Mindful Outdoor Leadership. Lisa has two grown children and lives in Maine with her husband Al.

We look forward to this Costa Rica hiking and mindfulness adventure and hope that you can join us! If you are interested then contact us and we will answer all of your questions.

Sue and Lisa

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