



Hidden Treasures TOURS

North Carolina Master Gardener Tour of Costa Rica **February 23 - March 3, 2019**

Specifically developed for Extension Master Gardener volunteers, this trip will focus on the amazing plants & gardens of Costa Rica. We will visit outstanding public gardens as well as stunning private gardens. We will tour ornamental as well as edible crop production. We will explore some of the best national parks in the world and seashores without compare.

For complete details and images, visit the [ITINERARY WEBSITE](#)

DAY 1, FEB 23: SAN JOSE

Lodgings: Hotel Bougainvillea

Meals included: dinner

Welcome! Following arrival at Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO) and private shuttle to Hotel Bougainvillea, you will have the remainder of the day to relax and take photographs. The Garden Club of Costa Rica recently recognized the [Hotel Bougainvillea gardens](#) as the “Best Garden of Costa Rica”. Tonight you will meet with your guide and fellow travelers at the hotel’s restaurant for your welcome dinner and orientation.

DAY 2, FEB 24: PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUI

Lodgings: La Quinta

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Today we drive to the Northern Lowlands but first will stop at the [La Paz Waterfall Gardens](#). Walk through beautiful orchid and hummingbird gardens on your way to the magnificent waterfalls. Three kilometers of serpentine paved trails allow visitors to experience and photograph the forest as they wind through both cloud and rainforest.

La Paz Waterfall Gardens has one of the world's largest enclosed butterfly observatories, covering 18,000 sq ft, with many species of colorful native Costa Rican butterflies, plants and animals. In addition, you will likely see jungle cats, hummingbirds and other birds, snakes, frogs, monkeys and more.

NOTE: Because of the altitude, the weather at the Waterfall Gardens can be very windy, misty and chilly. Wear comfortable walking shoes and have a sweater or wind-breaker handy!

DAY 3, FEB 25: PUERTO VIEJO DE SARAPIQUI

Lodgings: La Quinta

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

This morning we enjoy a visit to [La Selva Biological Station](#), a research station managed by the [Organization for Tropical Studies](#) for a walk on their trails before heading out for an afternoon visit of a working pineapple plantation.

La Selva

Located in the Caribbean foothills of Costa Rica, La Selva has been an educational, research, and conservation site since 1953. The site is 1614 hectares and has over 1850 species of plants. Birds are a magnificent site in the area with La Selva housing over 448 species. Each year hundreds of scientists visit the site to gain insight into the tropical ecology. La Selva is home to five cat species and over 70 species of bat.

Organic Paradise Tour

The [Organic Paradise Tour](#) is a tour of a 33-hectare organic pineapple plantation. Located in La Virgen de Sarapiquí in Costa Rica, it is an area known for the richness of its soils and its abundance of nature. We will learn about the organic practices and innovations, including compost fertilization, natural herbicides, crop rotation and companion planting.

DAY 4, FEB 26: ARENAL LA FORTUNA

Lodgings: Arenal Observatory Lodge & Spa

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

We head out this morning to the area of Arenal Volcano where we will visit the [Mistico Hanging Bridges](#) and enjoy a [Rainforest Chocolate tour](#).

Mistico Arenal Hanging Bridges Park

Located in La Fortuna Town, Mistico Arenal Hanging Bridges Park is a nature reserve dedicated to protecting Costa Rica's natural environment and its species. The park is currently home to hundreds of species of animals and features 15 bridges.

Rainforest Chocolate Tour

With the view of the majestic Arenal Volcano in La Fortuna of San Carlos, the Rainforest Chocolate Tour offers a lovely rainforest experience. We will discover the ancient secrets of chocolate and learn interesting aspects of cocoa and chocolate, including its origin and history. They will also participate in the production process, from the harvesting of the fruit, drying and grinding of the seed, and developing the traditional drink to enjoying the high-quality organic chocolate.

DAY 5, FEB 27: ARENAL LA FORTUNA

Lodgings: Arenal Observatory Lodge & Spa

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Today we visit the [Vivencias Campesinas Agroecological Farm](#) for a tour before heading to [Ecotermales hotsprings](#). Ecotermales has changing facilities. Bring your bathing suit, flip flops, and towel!

Eco Termales Fortuna

Eco Termales Fortuna are hot springs located in San Carlos. We will enjoy the thermal pools which range from 37 degrees to 41 degrees and run from the Arenal Volcano. Or if you prefer, relax in the cool water pools and waterfall.

DAY 6, FEB 28: MANUEL ANTONIO

Lodgings: Karahe Beach Hotel

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

This morning we head to the Central Pacific coast where you will have free time to enjoy the beach and relax at the hotel.

DAY 7, MAR 1: MANUEL ANTONIO

Lodgings: Karahe Beach Hotel

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Today we enjoy a full day of activities in the area! We start with a morning visit to [Manuel Antonio National Park](#) followed by an afternoon visit to Villa Vanilla for the [Rainforest Spices Tour](#), where you will experience the sights, tastes and scents of vanilla, cinnamon, pepper and other tropical spices, essential oils plants and a wide variety of ornamental plants.

Manuel Antonio National Park

Manuel Antonio contains a charming combination of rainforest, beaches and coral reefs. The beaches are the most beautiful in the country, lined with lush forest, and the snorkeling is excellent too. The forest is home for sloths, iguanas, the rare and adorable squirrel monkeys and millions of colorful little crabs. And the trail that winds around Punta Cathedral affords some spectacular views.

DAY 8, MAR 2: SAN JOSE

Lodgings: Hotel Bougainvillea

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Our last full day in beautiful Costa Rica will be spent enjoying a beautiful and delicious chocolate tour at [Sibú Chocolates](#). Sibú Chocolate Tasting Tours are done at the production site in San Isidro de Heredia, Costa Rica, on an outdoor terrace surrounded by gardens. We will sample fresh cacao fruit, roasted cocoa beans, an indigenous hot chocolate recipe from the 1500s, dark chocolate squares and classic European style bonbons. Not a bad way to end a wonderful trip!

DAY 9, MAR 3: DEPARTURE

Meals included: breakfast

Sadly, all great trips must come to an end. Enjoy breakfast at the hotel, and transfer to the SJO international airport. Pura Vida and safe travels everyone!