

The Costa Rica Caribbean Experience

Adventure and Eco-travel for Jewish Young
Professionals: the Pura Vida Way!

February 18-26, 2012

- ▶ Tropical beaches on the Caribbean
- ▶ White water rafting in jungle (Pacuare River - Class III-IV Rapids)
- ▶ 'Fly' over the rainforest on Zipline Jungle Tour
- ▶ Culturally and ecologically friendly rainforest guided treks.
- ▶ Shabbat with the San Jose Jewish Community (optional)
- ▶ Two nights on an ecological farm, home to untouched rainforest and amazing waterfalls
- ▶ Milk cows, collect eggs, and fish Tilapia for dinner
- ▶ Horseback Riding
- ▶ Explore the Arenal Volcano National Park, including a visit to the famous Baldi hot-springs.
- ▶ Feel the Earthy vibe of Puerto Viejo, a happening Caribbean haven.
- ▶ Local guides and tours ensure that the indigenous communities benefit from tourism revenues and protect the environment.
- ▶ Caribbean cooking class – kosher style!
- ▶ Most of the meals are included



EVERYTHING to the left is included in our trip. These adventures are paid for already – including a swim in the pool above – just imagine that!

You may, but you do not need to spend another dollar on an adventure – it's all priced into our packaged tour.

The 8-night **Costa Rica Caribbean Experience** offers a diverse adventure that combines the Caribbean Highlands of Costa Rica – with its breathtaking tropical beaches. It begins (*for those that observe Shabbat or that choose to arrive a day early*) by sampling some of the color that San Jose, the nation’s vibrant capital has to offer, as well as a Shabbat visit to its small but thriving Jewish community; goes on to the famous Arenal volcano and it’s just as famous hot-springs; continues with a whitewater rafting run down to the Caribbean Lowlands, with their tropical beaches, unique flora and fauna, active nightlife, and indigenous culture; and it ends in the highlands, with their lush mountainous rainforest, waterfalls, freshwater pools and serenity - spending Shabbat while based at a cool Jewish owned eco-farm on the slopes of Volcan Turrialba.



*Chilling in the natural pools of Finca Rio-Perla
(pic by [Matt Miller](#))*

This complete tour package provides an exciting adventure-experience brimming with activities (including chill time), all in a short but long week, and all in the beautiful and peaceful paradise called Costa Rica. It offers a mosaic for all your senses, focusing on the contrast between the highlands and the lowlands-coast. So come and spend an amazing week in the Costa Rican Caribbean!

We take the environment seriously, and plan our trips in accordance with the guidelines of eco-tourism: minimizing environmental damage through low impact travel, supporting local environmental projects and indigenous communities, and learning about the culture and natural environment of the places visited.

As we say in Costa Rica, Pura Vida!

The Costa Rica Caribbean Experience

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Trip itinerary

Friday, February 17th:

The trip officially starts on Saturday, but if you observe Shabbat, or wish to arrive a day earlier and visit San Jose and the Jewish Community, we ask that you plan to arrive San Jose as early as possible today, well before Shabbat comes in.



Shaarei Zion synagogue in San Jose

After landing, you will be taken to our hotel for the next two nights, where you might have time to rest a bit and explore downtown San Jose (depending on when you land), before heading to services and Kabbalat Shabbat at the impressive Modern Orthodox synagogue in San Jose, that is located in a complex that also hosts the [headquarters of the local Jewish community](#) (Mikva, religious school, kosher restaurant).

Please read [this Hadassah article](#) for more info about the Jewish Community in Costa Rica.

After services you will return back to your hotel (walking distance for Shomrei Shabbat).

Accommodation: San Jose hotel

Saturday, February 18th:

For those of you that landed on Friday today offers you a few options: If you choose, you can return to the synagogue for morning services, followed by a communal lunch with the congregation. During the afternoon, you will be able to explore San Jose - you will be staying about a mile west of downtown, and it should be a nice Shabbat walk to some of the main



The Poas Volcano Crater Lake

attractions, such as the Plaza De La Cultura, the National Theater and the National Museum.

On the hand, you might wish to head out of town on a short daytrip to the beautiful [Poás Volcano](#), just north of town. The Poas Volcano, a National Park, reaches to the height of 2,300 meters above sea level. It is an active volcano with a beautiful blue crater lake at its summit, located amidst alpine cloud forest.

If you are arriving today, you will be greeted at the San Jose Jaun Santamaria International Airport (SJO) and brought back to the hotel, where you will be able to rest up from your trip and join the rest of the group in exploring downtown San Jose and for dinner.

This evening, with the entire group present, we will all go out for dinner in downtown San Jose, and check out the Latino vibe of the local nightlife.



Downtown San Jose

Accommodation: [San Jose hotel](#)

Sunday, February 19th:

This morning, after breakfast, we will head out of town through the mountains and the green central plateau to the town of [La Fortuna](#), near the majestic Arenal Volcano. The ride will be about 4 hours long, with a possible stop at a traditional coffee plantation along the way.

When we arrive in La Fortuna, we will check into the [Monte Real](#) hotel, which is in a great location - from your rooms you will be able to observe the magnificent Arenal volcano!

After settling in to our hotel and eating lunch in town, we will head out of town to the [Baldi Hot Springs](#) where we will experience one of the world's most amazing offerings. Here we will relax in Mother Nature's enormous hot tub. The hot springs are fed by an underground river heated naturally by the Arenal Volcano to the perfect temperature of 101 degrees. We will spend the later part of the day here, enjoying all that Baldi has to offer – and relaxing. An extensive buffet dinner is also included in the package. We will be picked up and taken back to the hotel in the evening, ending a fun and relaxing day!



Baldi Hot Springs, Arenal

Accommodation: [Hotel Monte Real](#)

Monday, February 20th:

This morning, after eating breakfast at the hotel, we will be heading out to an adventure that is synonymous with Costa Rica - a [Zipline Canopy Adventure](#) near Arenal – where we will glide through the forest and fly high from one high platform to another!

The Canopy tour consists of a series of cables attached from tree to tree on which you glide along using a pulley that it's secured to alpinism equipment (the harness). You will be enjoying the tour safely hanging facing front as you soar through the rain forest. (



Tour participants on the Jungle Canopy Tour

The Canopy consists of 15 cables and 16 platforms, traveling a full distance of 3 kilometers (1.86 miles), making it the longest and the best in the area. The cables' distances vary from 50 meters to 500 meters with varying heights and speeds.

During the journey it is possible to see wild life at its best. Keep your eyes open and you may catch a glimpse of howler monkeys, sloths, and even exotic birds that roam wild in the rain forests of Costa Rica. Once the tour is completed you will find yourself walking through a cobble stoned path and crossing the crocodile and caiman farm followed by the amphibian and butterfly conservatory. You can also relax in our hot or fresh spring pools complete with water slides for no additional cost.



Arenal Volcano

After our canopy adventure, we will have lunch in La Fortuna, rest a bit, and leave from our hotel to go on the **Arenal Volcano Tour Hike** – we will enjoy the most extraordinary view of the Arenal Volcano on a gentle hike along the base of this marvelous “Mountain of Fire”, climbing close to the crater of the volcano, which has been pretty active since 1968. The Hike begins in one the trails close to the volcano, which will take us through the forest over recent lava flows and the area destroyed

in 1968 now in the process of regeneration. We are going to be on this trail for about 2 ½ hours.

After returning to our hotel, we will have a free evening in La Fortuna, and eat dinner at one of the many restaurants in town.

Accommodation: Hotel Monte Real

Tuesday, February 21st:

Today we will be picked up early in the morning to go on a day long [whitewater rafting adventure](#) down the Pacuare River, known as one of the top five rafting rivers in the world for its scenery and rapids (Class III-IV). We will be traveling to the Caribbean Highlands, where the trip begins – the run is 32 km long, taking 3-1/2 to 5 hours - depending on water level.



Tour participants rafting on the Pacuare River – what an experience!

A big breakfast and hearty lunch will be served at the company's operation center before and after the trip. When we are done, it's time to be drive to Puerto Viejo on the Caribbean Coast.

Puerto Viejo is one of the most happening places in Costa Rica - a place where surfers, travelers, backpackers and the counter-culture crowd blend with the local Latino, Afro-Caribbean and Bribri indigenous cultures, with its pristine coastline acting as a backdrop. Find more information about the town here: www.puertoviejoweb.com.

In Puerto Viejo, you will be staying in a comfortable mid-level hotel, such as the elegant [Banana Azul](#), or the [Shawandha](#).

After checking in to our hotel, we will be heading out to eat dinner at one of the many fine restaurants Puerto Viejo has to offer. Later, we can enjoy live Reggae music with mojitos, daiquiris or fresh Pina Colada!

Accommodation: Banana Azul or Shawandha

Wednesday, February 22nd

Good morning!

In the open time this morning there will be some options suggested, but really, it is up to you to decide. Rent bicycles and tour the beaches, take a surfing lesson, go to the local butterfly or botanical gardens, visit a local jungle animal rescue center, or just spend the morning on the beach.

Cruiser bikes are one of the best ways to get around the Caribbean (Highly recommended)! Cruise down the road from Puerto Viejo towards Manzanillo, checking out the different beaches and towns along the way. Starting at \$4 a day, there are many bike rental shops around town.

Head south to visit the highly recommended [Jaguar Rescue Center](#), a unique [animal rescue center](#), where you will learn about (and hold!) some of the amazing animals (including monkeys) that call this area home. Tours of the center start only at 9:30 and at 11:30 am – (the later tour will conflict with the zipline adventure).



Tour participant with young howler monkey at the Jungle Rescue Center

Some other morning options:

- Botanical Gardens: A short walk from the center of Puerto Viejo to the black beach.
- Surfing Lessons on the coast that is an international Mecca for surfers!

We will be meeting back at the hotel in the early afternoon, and take a short ride up the mountains to the [Indigenous BriBri Tribal Area](#). There we will learn about the history of the native peoples of Costa Rica, medicinal plants used by the BriBri, as well as the history and production of chocolate. Yes, some of the best organic chocolate one can ever taste will be sampled!



Traditional chocolate making at the BriBri reservation

Upon our return to Puerto Viejo, we will enjoy a late afternoon/sunset swim along the magnificent **Punta Uva beach** south of town- thought by many as the most beautiful beach in Costa Rica!

After our swim it is time to learn to prepare our dinner – Caribbean style!

We will take a Caribbean cooking lesson (kosher style – i.e. fish and veggies).

Using fruits and veggies typical to Coastal Talamanca, you'll learn to cook in the traditional Caribbean way, such as patacones, batidos, or fish in Caribbean sauce, etc. This is also an opportunity to spend some time with one of the matriarchs from the local community. Here the Afro-Caribbean folks speak what some call “Patios” some call a local dialect of English. After this we will all sit down to eat a unique and memorable dinner!

At night we are free to explore the town– all while taking in the special and laid back ambiance of Puerto Viejo. Later, we may hit one of the bars, clubs, or live music venues that dot the town...



Punta Uva Beach

Accommodation: Banana Azul or Shawandha

Thursday, February 23rd

The early wake up this morning will take us on a half day hike in the amazing [Gandoca Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge](#) – one of the best trips for wildlife viewing in all of Costa Rica. The hike will take us on some of the Refuge's inner trails, or to explore the bluffs and tiny hidden beaches along the coast. It will include a walk through the primary rainforest to encounter many of its colorful inhabitants and exquisite bird watching with the local naturalist, Tino. This tour is provided by [ATEC](#), a local nonprofit that helps promote culturally and ecologically sound tourism and small-scale, locally owned and responsible businesses in the



Hiking the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge

area.

After the walk we can lunch at [Maxi's Restaurant](#), considered by many to be the best seafood restaurant in the Caribbean (with many veggie friendly options!). Fresh food is served here Caribbean style with a modern twist.

After lunch, we will stay to enjoy the breathtaking and tranquil beaches of Manzanillo (to soothe our bodies from all that hiking!), and stay there until the sunset.

For those interested, snorkeling is available in some of the best tropical reefs Costa Rica has to offer – with the local [Aquamor Marine Adventure Center](#).

After sunset we will return to Puerto Viejo stopping on our way back at the Israeli owned [Pita Bonita](#) restaurant, serving some of the best Hummus outside of the Holy Land!

Accommodation: Banana Azul or Shawandha

Friday, February 24th

Good morning!

Time to head up to the highlands, to the countryside paradise on the slopes of the Turrialba volcano - Finca Rio Perla (Farm of the Pearl River) - a sprawling 240 acres, including many acres of untouched rainforest. This is where we will spend Shabbat, and our last two nights in Costa Rica.

The farm is about two hours from Puerto Viejo, and our welcome to the farm will begin with a check-in and some refreshments, followed by a short orientation walk, where we will get to meet our hosting Tico family, Efrain & Vivian.

Finca Rio Perla

High on the Caribbean Highlands of Costa Rica, with elevations ranging from about 1,000 to 2,250 feet (350 to 750 meters), this beautiful eco-farm is blessed with moderate temperatures, great breezes, amazing views, and a relative lack of insects (like mosquitoes).



Roey, a tour participant, and Vivian, the farm manager, show off some of the bounty of the organic garden on Finca Rio-Perla: eggs, lettuce and yucca!

This farm is a special place. It is home to untouched rainforest on the slopes of Volcan Turrialba, breathtaking waterfalls, refreshing natural pools and streams, and a view that goes on for miles and miles, out to the Caribbean coast. These protected rainforest land on the farm's property are accessible to visitors to enjoy during their stay. Horses, a macadamia grove, and hammocks are available to further enhance this natural experience.

Finca Rio Perla is also a working farm, where guests can experience the authentic Costa Rican countryside. A herd of dairy cows, sheep, free-range hens, tilapia fishponds, organic vegetable gardens, and a grand macadamia plantation each provide ingredients that go straight to the kitchen. Guests can put food on their plates by collecting eggs, milking cows, gardening, nut picking, and fishing. Guests can also help churn cheese and ice cream from the fresh milk.

The farm offers traditional Tico (Costa Rican) food that is primarily vegetarian. Dairy, eggs and fish are harvested onsite and become additional meal ingredients. The kitchen makes all attempts to use farm-grown, locally produced, and/or organic products.

A variety of rooms for overnight lodging are available. They are rustic but comfortable.

The stay at Finca Rio Perla is hosted by Efrain, Vivian, and Manuel, a Tico family, who have created a unique opportunity to explore, experience, and connect with the authentic Costa Rica. This is also a great opportunity to learn and/or practice Spanish and a great opportunity to learn Tico cooking.

Finca Rio Perla is accessible and connected, yet remote and independent. It is located about 60 miles (100 km) east of San Jose and about 40 miles (60km) west of Limon. The farm is connected to the municipal water supplier, electrical grid, and telephone and internet systems.

The farm's working philosophy is based on both traditional practices and new technologies to maintain and nurture the environment. The farm is striving toward organic and natural production and processing practices; using new technologies. It calls its balanced and eclectic approach to sustainable living: *Agro-Eco Pragmatism*.



Delicious veggie breakfast on Finca Rio Perla
(pic by [Matt Miller](#))



Chilling on the deck of the main house
(Posada) of Finca Rio-Perla

The farm itself is owned by Dr. Paul Siegel, who has been a Rural Development Consultant with the World Bank for more than 20 years working in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Europe. He was also a professor in the USA (University of Tennessee) and Israel (Tel-Hai College in the Upper Galilee, and the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies at Kibbutz Ketura). **Paul's vision for the farm is one of creating a thriving ecological community that will abide to sustainable guidelines, and also incorporate Jewish environmental themes.**

Our orientation tour will be followed by a fresh home-cooked veggie lunch, after which it is time to **saddle up!** From the stables you will leave on a horseback ride towards the upper area of the farm. You will leave the horses near the macadamia processing shed, take a tour of the macadamia plantation, taste some fresh sugarcane, and hike down to the big waterfall (over 100 ft!). For nearly two hours you will take a swim in the cool water at the fall base and enjoy the rainforest around you. you can climb a small waterfall and go swimming right under the big one - an amazing experience! On the way back you will seek out some pipa's (water filled coconuts) to open for a refreshing drink.



Horseback riding on Finca Rio Perla



Planting a tree on the farm

In the afternoon, before Shabbat, we will have time to do as many of the following as each of us chooses:

Tilapia fishing in the farm's fishponds (which will be used for dinner); exploring the farm grounds on your own; stroll to the nearby small waterfalls; play Frisbee; pass a soccer ball, or feel the serenity while lounging on the hammocks.

After our long day, we will sit down for our festive Shabbat meal – a traditional Tico vegetarian dinner, including the tilapia we fished as well as freshly baked challa and some local wine. Dinner will be followed

by a free evening to read, drink, play games and fall asleep to the sounds of the jungle around us.

Accommodation: Finca Rio Perla

Saturday, February 25th

Good morning Finca Rio Perla!

Today is Shabbat, and a day of rest – and depending on what you are up to or your level of Shabbat observance, you can chill during the day, explore the area and/or partake in some farm activities.

Feel free to **wake up early and to milk the dairy cows** – we will use the milk to make cheese later!

Optional farm activities for today:

- ✚ **Plant trees** to help reforest the area and offset travel associated carbon emissions
- ✚ Sow the seeds and cultivate the land at the farm's **organic vegetable and herb garden**,
- ✚ **Collect fresh eggs** from the hen coop,
- ✚ Using machetes, clear brush and pick nuts at the **macadamia grove**.
- ✚ **Tico style cheese/ice cream making workshop with Vivian**

Sometime in the afternoon we will go on a hike to the small waterfalls near the main house, and if there is interest we could walk back up and explore the larger, more remote waterfalls.

After dinner and a Havdalah ceremony under the stars, we can get into the mood by watching a rainforest themed film or go into town to enjoy a local Tico bar!



Finca Rio Perla Activities

Accommodation: Finca Rio Perla

Sunday, February 26th

Time to say goodbye! We will leave Finca Rio Perla by 7:30 am, in time to make our flights back home.

*****Please note that the time and location of an activity might change due to unexpected circumstances, such as inclement weather and hazardous road conditions.**

Practical Details

Dates

The Caribbean Experience trip will take place from Saturday, February 18th to Sunday, February 26th, 2012 (8 nights in total; 9 nights for those wishing to arrive on Friday). We will be meeting at and leaving the San Jose (the capital) international airport (SJO). We ask that you plan to be on a flight that will land in San Jose by 4 pm on February 18th. If you decide to arrive a day earlier, please arrive by 3 pm on Friday so we can prepare for Shabbat. Your flight home should be no earlier than noon on Sunday, February 26th.



A view of Volcan Turrialba from Finca Rio Perla

If you want to arrive a day or many early, or choose to leave later, please let us know how we can help you experience more of this magnificent country. We can arrange for a pick-up or drop-off in another part of San Jose at the beginning or end of the trip. Day trips from San Jose include the nearby volcanoes of Poas and Irazu. If you are interested in this option, please let us know!

If you observe the Sabbath you have an option of arriving on Friday and spending the weekend in San Jose, attending services in the Jewish community – or arriving Sunday and joining the group.

Accommodations

For our time on the farm, guests will stay in rustic but comfortable rooms, uniquely decorated with interesting artwork, local woodworking, and furniture. Wide windows offer a spectacular scenic view and cool clean air mountain air, accompanied by soothing sounds of nearby streams, howler monkeys and birds!

Rooms on the farm sleep 2-3 people, with shared bathrooms and showers.

In San Jose, you will stay in a comfortable hotel which is walking distance from the Synagogue and a short ride from downtown, such as the [La Sabana](#).

For our time in Arenal, we will be staying [Monte Real](#) hotel, boasting magnificent views of the volcano and a tropical backyard with resident sloths.

On the southern Caribbean coast we will be staying in a comfortable mid-level hotel, such as the elegant [Banana Azul](#), or the [Shawandha](#). We will be pairing up to share the rooms, though you might choose to be in a single room for an extra fee (if you are interested in this option, please let us know).



Bunk room on Finca Rio-Perla



Banana Azul Hotel, Puerto Viejo



Hotel Monte Real, Arenal

Guides

The Caribbean Experience tour will be escorted by an experienced guide that will be with you for the length of your trip, sharing his or her unique perspective of the country.

In various activities, such as the jungle hike in Manzanillo or the Arenal hike, we are using the best local specialty guides with years of expertise in introducing tourists to the natural beauty of Costa Rica. We work mostly with local guides as well as with tourism non-profit organizations such as [ATEC](#), which make sure that the local indigenous

communities benefit from tourism revenues while protecting the environment and the traditional way of life.

Transportation

We provide all transfers during the week using an air conditioned van or minibus, driven by a bilingual driver / guide.

Insurance

We advise you purchase travelers insurance before leaving – following is a suggested link that allows you to compare between different options and [purchase the insurance online](#). This should not cost more than \$20.

Prior to departure, we required a signed waiver for your trip and your stay on the farm will be (you will have to fill similar waivers in other adventure activities we will be doing throughout the trip).

What to bring

Before departing, you will receive a comprehensive list of suggested things to bring on the Caribbean Experience.

Cost of trip

The cost per person is \$1425. If you are interested in arriving on Friday, February 17th, and would like to participate in Shabbat activities, you will have to add \$75 to the cost.

[This is not a budget tour, but a memorable adventure that will fit your budget!](#)

Great! How do I sign up?

To reserve your spot on the trip, follow [the link to our website](#) to make your secure deposit of \$150 via the Google Checkout system. After securing your spot, please fill out our [tour registration form](#).

The trip will leave with a minimum of 8 participants and a maximum of 16. If this number is not reached by January 11th, we will cancel and postpone the trip, and you will be fully reimbursed.

If you cancel your attendance after January 11th, we will reimburse you the sum of \$1275, with \$150 kept as cancellation fee.

Once we reach the minimum of 8 participants, we will notify you so that you can go ahead and purchase your flight.

Note: If you have a discount code, you will be asked to provide it before submitting a payment via Google Checkout.

For general questions about the trip, please write us at info@costaribbean.com

Please feel free to forward this info to any friends of yours that might be interested in joining us for this week - ask us about an additional discount for groups of two or more that register together!

The cost includes:

- **Transportation and transfers to and from all locations in Costa Rica by a bilingual guide/driver.**
- **Full accompaniment by a Costa Rica Caribbean Experience staff person.**
- **8 nights of accommodations on the Finca Rio Perla farm, in San Jose, in Hotel Monte Real in Arenal, and in a hotel in Puerto Viejo.** Price is for accommodations of 2 per room. Single occupancy rooms are available for an additional nightly fee.
- **All activities and all meals during our 2 nights at the Finca Rio-Perla eco-farm.**
- **Meals included in trip: 8 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 6 dinners**
- **One day of amazing whitewater rafting on the Pacuare River (including breakfast/lunch)**
- **Gandoca -Manzanillo Wildlife Hike**
- **Caribbean cooking class**
- **BriBri Cacao Tour (history of local indigenous people and organic chocolate making)**
- **Jungle Canopy Tour/ Zipline Adventure in Arenal**
- **Entrance to the Baldi hot-springs in Arenal, including a buffet dinner**
- **Welcome night dinner in San Jose**

- **Dinner at Pita Bonita in Puerto Viejo**

Please note that if you do not wish to partake in the rafting, canopy tour, and zipline, you may opt out and we will reduce the cost of your trip accordingly.

The cost does not include:

- **Airfare**
- **Costa Rica departure tax of \$28**
- **Traveler insurance** (we will be able to arrange this for you if needed)
- **Some meals on the Caribbean coast and Arenal**
- **Alcoholic beverages**
- **Tips and gratuities**

Our tours are organized by the Costa Rica Caribbean Experience, a division of Greener Travel Company, LLC. The company was founded by Ami Greener, an experienced and enthusiastic environmentalist that has been captivated by the unique beauty of Costa Rica. By forming personal relationships with local providers in Costa Rica (hotel owners, activity outfitters and the staff of Finca Rio-Perla, the amazing farm that we visit), we are able to offer a tailored experience to both individuals and couples traveling alone and looking to explore the area, as well as group tours which a member of our staff or local Costa Rican associates will guide.

For further information and questions, please contact us at:

The Costa Rica Caribbean Experience

info@costaribbean.com

US: +1-646-469-9743

www.costaribbean.com

Though the dates for this trip are set, if you want to join and cannot take the whole week off from work, we could accommodate you for part of the trip, and price it differently as well. If you cannot make it on these dates, but would like to plan a visit alone, with a small group of friends or a romantic getaway with a significant other - we can help you plan that trip as well with some of these amazing adventures – we regularly send couples, families and small groups of friends on a tailored Caribbean Experience!