

THE COSTA RICA EXPERIENCE

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

July 31 – August 9, 2015

Itinerary at a glance!

Friday: Arrival – Friday services + Shabbat dinner

Saturday: Poas Volcano or Shabbat services in morning, walking tour of san Jose in afternoon, welcome dinner in evening

Sunday: Pacuare white water rafting – arrival in Puerto Viejo on the Caribbean

Monday: Morning – Gandoca rainforest hike. Afternoon – beach time. Evening – Caribbean cooking class

Tuesday: Free morning (beach, bikes, pool, Jaguar Rescue). Afternoon - Visit to BriBri indigenous land, chocolate lady and Volio waterfall.

Wednesday: Morning transfer to Tortuguero by boat. Afternoon visit to Tortuguero village. Night turtle nesting walk.

Thursday: Transfer to Arenal volcano area. Visit to Baldi hot springs.

Friday: Morning zipline – afternoon tour of Finca Luna Nueva – Shabbat dinner on farm.

Saturday: Day on farm. Morning tour of Sacred seeds, afternoon rainforest hike on property along Cavalonga Trail.

Sunday: time to say goodbye!

Greener Travel
Sustainable Adventures

The 9 day Costa Rica Experience for Young Jewish Professionals (for singles in their 20s - mid 40s) this summer offers a diverse adventure that combines the Volcanic Highlands of Costa Rica – with its breathtaking tropical beaches. It begins by visiting the capital San Jose and the local Jewish community, after which we visit Tortuguero National Park, with its majestic jungle canals and the late-night ritual of endangered turtle nesting on its beach; head down the Caribbean coast, with its tropical beaches, unique flora and fauna, active nightlife, and indigenous cultures; and end near the Arenal volcano where we will experience a chill Shabbat weekend zipling through the jungle, visiting the volcano, experiencing a serene eco-farm and soaking in some world famous hot springs!



Zipline adventure in the jungle!

This complete tour package provides a diverse and 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 and mountains!

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!

Greener Travel
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Trip Attendees

There will be a total of 9 people in our group, and I am looking forward to spending a great trip with you!

We currently have a group of 8 cool Jews from the US and Canada. Most of you will be arriving on Friday, A few arriving a day earlier. We will be joined on Saturday by Gustavo Ortiz, our Tico (Costa Rican) guide, a man who will fascinate and entertain us with his knowledge during the trip!

- **Brooke and Brian from the Boston area**
- **Vitaliy from Philly**
- **Daniel, Shaina and Joshua from the NYC area**
- **Amy from Chicago**
- **Toni from Toronto**
- **Ami from DC**

Rooming

During our trip we will be staying in various lodgings, from urban hotel rooms in San Jose, to the rustic comfort of Finca Luna Nueva. We divided the rooms according to preferences, gender, as well as accommodating to those that requested to be in a single room.

Note: roommates are not set in stone – during the trip we make new friends, and if you find yourself preferring to room with someone else then listed below, let me know!

July 31 – August 2: Palma Real, San Jose

Room 1: Ami Greener + Brian Fried

Room 2: Daniel Small + Vitaliy Anatolenko

Room 3: Joshua Finkelstain

Room 4: Brooke Feldman + Shaina Fine

Room 5: Amy Papas

Room 6: Tobi Fried

August 2-5: Pizote Lodge, Puerto Viejo

We will be sharing 4 houses with two bedrooms in each one. Each person gets their own room!

House 1: Daniel Small + Vitaliy Anatolenko

House 2: Joshua Finkelstain + Brian Fried

House 3: Brooke Feldman + Shaina Fine

House 4: Amy Papas + Tobi Fried

Regular room: Ami

August 5 -6: Laguna Lodge, Tortuguero

Room 1: Ami + Vitaliy Anatolenko

Room 2: Daniel Small + Brian Fried

Room 3: Joshua Finkelstain

Room 4: Brooke Feldman + Tobi Fried

Room 5: Amy Papas

Room 6: Shaina Fine

August 6-8: Finca Luna Nueva

Family Bungalow 7

Room 1: Brian Fried

Room 2: Daniel Small + Vitaliy Anatolenko

Family Bungalow 8:

Room 1: Shaina Fine + Tobi Fried

Room 2: Brooke Feldman

Casa Sombra 13: Joshua Finkelstain

Casa Sombra 14: Amy Papas

Trip itinerary

Please note that times of activities and locations might change due to unexpected circumstances. For example, local weather and road conditions might result in changes in the itinerary.

Arrival at the San Jose airport (SJO)

You will each be arriving at the airport at different times on Friday. You will be picked up by a driver that will take you to our hotel (Palma Real).

Please look for an individual email concerning the time of your airport pickup, and what other attendees you will be picked up with!

When you're deplaning have your passport ready and immigration card filled out. Once you get off the plane, you head for "migración." This might be a long line...

WELCOME!

- Go through the line and get your passport stamped.
- Go downstairs to retrieve your luggage (if you checked it).
- Grab your luggage and put it through the big X-ray machines and proceed outside
- Make sure you've kept your baggage claim stubs; they might ask you for them on your way out.

When you land you can exchange USD in the airport bank – or take out Colones in the ATM (about 535 Colones to one USD)

Also, if you want to have a local Tico (Costa Rican) cell number when you are in the county, remember to get the ICE (this is the name of the government phone company) GSM phone chip from the booth near the exit from customs. You can buy chips in \$5, \$10 or \$20. They might still have a deal where you can buy a phone for \$20- with \$20 prepaid credit – basically a free phone.

If you bring your own phone, you can use most any old and unlocked T-mobile or AT&T phone that uses the GSM technology. This will allow you to receive calls from the US, if you wish, and be in contact with me/others on the trip.

Friday, July 31

The trip *officially* starts on Saturday, but all of you are arriving a day earlier and visiting San Jose and the Jewish Community.

After landing, you will be taken to our hotel, [Hotel Palma Real](#), where we will be staying the next two nights. 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, and a communal dinner (oneg) at the [Congregación B'nei Israel](#), the liberal synagogue (affiliated with both the Reform and Conservative movements).



Congregación B'nei Israel San Jose

We will drive to the synagogue before this time, and light candles – we will also take the time before Shabbat to get to know each other – this is the first time all our group will be together!

San Jose Shabbat times: Light Candles at: 5:41 pm - Shabbat Ends: 6:32 pm

Services begin at 6:30, and we will be participating in a tri-lingual service – with a tri-lingual siddur unique to this community.

After services we will have an option to walk back to the hotel, or take a shuttle (approx 30 min walking).

For our time in San Jose you will be staying in [Hotel Palma Real](#), conveniently located on the north side of [La Sabana Metropolitan Park](#), the largest urban park in Costa Rica. The hotel is 1.5 miles from downtown San Jose, and within walking distance from both synagogues we will be visiting. We will have access to the [Swimming pool](#) in the nearby Cristina hotel.



Saturday August 1

Morning option A:

This morning, those that wish to will head to Shabbat morning services 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).

Services begin at 9:00, followed by a communal lunch.

After services you will return back to our hotel (walking distance for shomrei Shabbat – about 30 minutes).

For more info, please read [this Hadassah article](#) , [this virtual tour](#), and [this article from Haa'retz](#) for more info about the Jewish Community in Costa Rica.



Shaarei Zion synagogue in San Jose

Morning option B:

Most of you have decided to go on the [Poás Volcano](#) tour this morning.

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. As we ascend, there is a noticeable change in temperature and vegetation, preparing us for the pleasure of the exuberant cloud forest of the Poas. At the Volcano we will have time to observe the impressive main active crater with its sulfur fumaroles and the second dormant crater.



The Poas Volcano Crater Lake

Time permitting you will visit a coffee estate, where your guide will explain a bit about the coffee crop, its cycle and its importance to Costa Rica.

This will be your first time to meet our highly professional guide [Gustavo Leon](#).

We recommend you bring: light jacket, walking shoes, binoculars and camera.

Pick up from hotel: 8:00 am. Return - about 1:00 pm.

Cost: Since we will be using our guide and bus for this trip, the cost will be \$20 per person, and includes: Entrance fee to the National Park, Entrance for guide + driver, parking fee.

Bring: comfortable walking shoes (tennis or hiking) and a windbreaker or light rain jacket.

Morning option C:

You can also decide to stay around the hotel, chill in the pool or walk to the Sabana Park, the largest urban park in Costa Rica, which is close to the hotel.

Afternoon:

At about 1 pm we will all regroup at the hotel – those that return from the volcano hike can grab lunch at one of the places close to the hotel. ***Lunch is on your own, and not included in cost of trip as originally planned. We have added on lunch at Maxi's Grill in Manzanillo later on instead!***

During the afternoon, we will be able to explore San Jose – we will be staying about a mile west of downtown, and we will be accompanied by Gustavo who will take us on a [historical walk of downtown San Jose](#). It should be a nice Shabbat walk to some of the main attractions, such as the Plaza De La Cultura, the National Theater and the National Museum.



Downtown San Jose

Note: In case of rain, Gustavo will give us an introduction to Costa Rica in the hotel's conference room.

Our walk will include an entry into the National Theater, or one of the downtown museums: Gold Museum -National Museum -Jade Museum

This evening, after Havdallah, with the entire group present, we will all go out for dinner in downtown San Jose, at [Restaurante Le Chateau 1525](#), located in a historical house in the baroque Barrio Amon neighborhood. We will enjoy a special vegetarian friendly fusion menu, and some house brewed beer!

We will be leaving the hotel for downtown at 6:30, and the bus will be returning to the hotel after dinner.

Depending on how you feel, you might want to check out the Latino vibe of the local nightlife, take in some drinks and maybe bust a salsa move – though remember, we are checking out of the hotel pretty early tomorrow!

Sunday, August 2

Whitewater Rafting Adventure!

Pickup from hotel: 6:00 am

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 18 miles long, taking 3-1/2 to 5 hours - depending on water level.



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

We will arrive at the Rios Tropicales Operations Center for a delicious, typical Costa Rican breakfast. After breakfast and changing into rafting gear, we will drive to our private rafting put-in on the banks of the Pacuare River.

Here we review and adjust all necessary equipment for proper fit, give you a comprehensive rafting safety talk, and instruct you on paddling basics. From here, you and will launch your raft and begin to paddle 19 miles deep into the heart of one of Costa Rica's most impressive primary rainforests. You'll pass through densely vegetated rainforest gorges, view cascading waterfalls, relax in serene pools and experience pounding rapids. You will enjoy an adrenaline-packed afternoon running the Pacuare's biggest rapids: Upper and Lower Huacas, Cimarron, Dos Montañas and more. Wildlife is abundant, with sloth, toucans, parrots, coatis, morpho butterflies and colorful frogs being common sights.

From the take-out, it's a short drive back to the Rios Tropicales Operations Center for a hearty and delicious lunch, hot showers, optional drinks and a handy souvenir store.

You will be able to leave your bags in the company's Explorations Center (or on our bus) during the rafting adventure. You will be getting a thorough safety instruction before you enter the water.

After lunch, it's time to head south - to the Caribbean coast.

Time permitting we might swing through the historic port of Limón.

A bit history: The biggest city on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, the birthplace of [United Fruit](#) and capital of Limón



Province, this hard-working port city sits removed from the rest of the country. Cruise ships deposit dazed-looking passengers between October and May. Around here, business is measured by truckloads of fruit, not busloads of tourists.

Christopher Columbus first dropped anchor in [Costa Rica](#) in 1502, just off the coast of Puerto Limón. The Atlantic coast, however, was left largely unexplored by Spanish settlers until the 19th century. In 1867, construction began on an ambitious railroad connecting the highlands to the sea. Limón was chosen as the site of a major port, which would facilitate exports of the coffee from the Central Valley.

The railroad project changed Costa Rica in dramatic ways. The freed Jamaican slaves that provided cheap labor for the railroad construction settled on the coast, introducing the English language and Caribbean culture to the previously homogeneous population. The bananas that were planted alongside the tracks as a cheap food source for the workers became the country's number-one export. And the American-owned United Fruit, which controlled the booming business, made Costa Rica a part of its banana empire.

In 1913 a banana blight shut down many Caribbean fincas, and much of the banana production moved to the Pacific coast. Afro-Caribbean workers, however, were restricted by visa regulations to Limón Province, so they were forbidden from following the employment opportunities. Stranded in the least-developed part of the country, many turned to subsistence farming, fishing or working on cocoa plantations. Others organized and staged bloody strikes against United Fruit.

In 1948 Limón provided key support to José Figueres during the 40-day civil war. In 1949 the new president enacted a constitution that finally granted blacks the right to work and travel freely throughout [Costa Rica](#).

This evening, we will be arriving in 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.

This evening, we will be checking into the [El Pizote lodge](#) in Puerto Viejo, and will probably have time for a dip in the warm waters of the Caribbean before heading out for dinner.



Pizote Lodge features comfortable bungalows amid a natural garden facing the Caribbean Sea. It offers Wi-Fi access in the lobby area, a games room with table tennis, and a swimming pool. Our accommodations have air conditioning .Pizote Lodge has a restaurant-bar on site that serves local dishes, and guests will be able to find other restaurants serving international and Caribbean-style right down the road in “downtown” Puerto Viejo.

Depending on our time of arrival, we can chill at the hotel or check out Puerto Viejo, but I suggest we enjoy a late afternoon swim along the magnificent **Punta Uva beach** south of the hotel- thought by many as the most beautiful beach in Costa Rica!

At about 6-7 pm we will be heading out to eat dinner at one of the many fine restaurants Puerto Viejo has to offer. Tonight is a free night, and you are free to choose where to eat – though I will recommend some good options. Later, head to one of the bars and enjoy live Reggae music with mojitos, daiquiris or fresh Pina Colada!



Punta Uva Beach

Monday, August 3

After breakfast, 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 Costa Rica!

We will be picked up from our hotel at 8:00 am, after breakfast.

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 area.



Hiking the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge



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. This lunch is included in the trip, and before the hike you will choose from the Caribbean menu with rice and beans, patacones, salad, Caribbean sauce, and a type of protein: fish filet, chicken, veggie grill, steak with onions or red snapper – this way lunch will wait for us when we get out of the jungle!

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 a few hours.

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](#).

At about 6 pm, 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.

Our host is Junior Palmar, not only an awesome local guide, but also the son one of Puerto Viejo's most famous and favorite cooks, miss Lidia. He invites you into his home. Mind now, Juni isn't a professional culinary instructor but this is real local flavor! Get to know a community's food and you can learn a lot about their culture. Practice your patois (or your Spanish) and learn some recipes you can take home with you, a taste of the Caribbean.

Special Hints: Bring a pen and note book to jot down recipes. Juni speaks the local dialect of English—a bit different from North American or European English



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...

Tuesday, August 4

Morning: Free time!

There is nothing planned for this morning, and you can choose from a few options: Rent bicycles and tour the beaches, take a surfing lesson, lounge in the pool or swim in Playa Negra right by our lodge.



Cruiser bikes

Cruiser bikes are one of the best ways to get around the Caribbean (highly recommended)! Cruise down the road from Playa Negra towards Punta Uva, checking out the different beaches along the way. Bikes can be rented at or near the hotel for about \$5 for the day.



On your next vacation you can go on another "all-inclusive" cruise...



...or you can beach cruise, Costa Rica style!

It's your choice. www.costaribbean.com

Morning option: The Jaguar Rescue Center

The [Jaguar Animal Rescue Center](#) offers shelter, treatment and protection to ill or wounded wild animals in the South Caribbean area.

The Center is run by Sandro, an expert in poisonous snakes, and Encar, a biologist with a vast experience with looking after wild mammals in captivity.

Sandro and Encar started the Jaguar Center with the aim of saving the lives of as many animals that come in to the shelter, as well as trying to re-introduce them to their natural habitat, the forests of the South Caribbean.

Their house has become a sanctuary for wild animals and they try to accommodate their jungle guests as well as they can: terrariums for the snakes, large spaces for the Congo monkeys to rest in after spending the whole day playing in the garden's trees, special quarantine cages for the animals arriving seriously injured and also a large supply of medicine and an operating theatre for emergency surgery if necessary.

Your visit helps support the work of the centre!

Tour times are 9 and 11 am.

Got Goat's Milk?

If you're visiting the center, you can help out by bringing with you to Costa Rica a can or two of [Meyenberg Powdered Goat's Milk](#) for the abandoned Howler Monkeys and Sloth babies at the center. They also need a product called [Bene-Bac](#) which is used for treating animals with intestinal problems. Unfortunately, neither of these products is available in Costa Rica.

Lunch is on our own – in the village or on the beach.



Tour participant with young howler monkey at the Jungle Rescue Center

Afternoon activity: BriBri visit, Chocolate Lady, Volio Waterfall

This afternoon we will be heading to the KèkòLdi Indigenous Territory. This 5,000+ hectare reserve is part of the Talamanca-Caribbean Biological Corridor, more than 36,000 hectares of land under protection. KèkòLdi is a mosaic of primary and secondary forests, abandoned cacao plantations and private farms. While there is no central “village” you’ll pass by traditionally built indigenous homes, bird-viewing towers, and more, and learn about Bribrí culture, history and use of the forest.

Our partner in organizing this visit is the Talamancan Association of Ecotourism and Conservation ([ATEC](#)), a non-for profit Greener Travel works with to benefit local communities.

About the BriBri

Just 1.7 percent of the Costa Rican population is of Indigenous descent (about 70,000). The BriBri and Cabécar who live within the Talamanca are the most numerous Indigenous populations in Costa Rica. They live in three main reserves. The Talamanca-BriBri Reserve and the Talamanca-Cabécar Reserve cover large areas of the interior Talamanca Mountains, and the KèkòLdi Reserve is smaller and just inland from Puerto Viejo. These reserves were created in 1977 following the adoption of the Indigenous Act by the Costa Rican government, giving the country’s Indigenous people the right to live within self-governed



*communities. However, the government retains the land titles to these territories. In the Talamanca forests, Indigenous people found palm trees (*Iriartea gigantea*, *Socratea durissima*) whose outer bark provided the building material for their houses; palm leaves (*Geonoma cuniatia*, *Raphia* sp) to weave thatched roofs; and sturdy vines (*Anthurium scandens* Aubl) that substituted for nails in construction. Many Indigenous people continue to live in thatch-roofed houses built entirely from forest products. Through secret ceremonies passed down through the generations, Indigenous shamans cure illnesses, employing medicinal plants and sacred.*

We will be taken through the Striut trail (Cacao in BriBri) in the tropical forest and learn from our guide Kaysh about the importance of different species of flora and fauna for his ancestors and those still used today by the locals. Your guide will tell you interesting mythological stories from the BriBri culture and the special connection of the people with the nature that surrounds them.

Chocolate Lady

Next we will visit an indigenous family where they make chocolate from the Cacao trees growing beside their house. You will learn and see demonstrated the process by which the cacao fruit is transformed into delicious and unique chocolate - which you will of course get to taste! You will have an opportunity to purchase some chocolate or other indigenous made handicrafts here (this is actually a good place to buy souvenirs and gifts, as it supports the local community directly. Note that part of the family speaks very limited English so if you don't speak Spanish your explanation of the process may take the form of a pantomime!

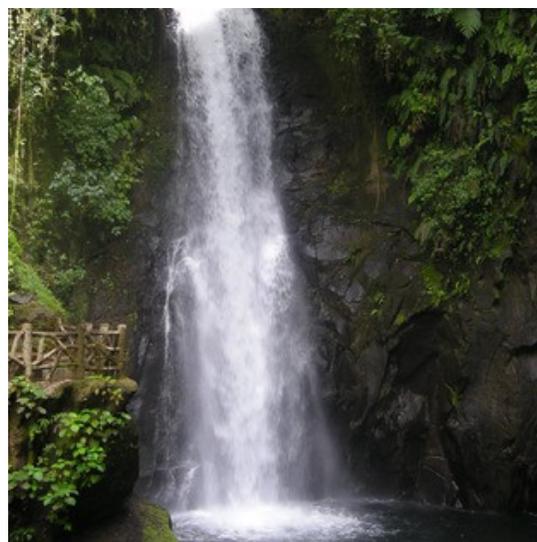


Traditional chocolate making at the BriBri reservation

Waterfall

Next, we get to visit the Volio waterfall, a 12m high waterfall in the Talamanca mountains, where you can swim if you like. Should this waterfall be too dry, we will take you to another waterfall in the area where you can enjoy swimming in the pristine nature pools.

Note: Your feet might get wet while exploring the waterfall, so make sure to wear appropriate shoes or bring an extra pair for changing after the hike!



We will return to the hotel to chill a bit, and for dinner, we will head to the Israeli owned [Pita Bonita](#) restaurant, serving some of the best Hummus outside of the Holy Land!

This dinner is included in the trip!

ברוכים הבאים!

Wednesday, August 5

We will be saying goodbye to Puerto Viejo, and leaving by 7 am, after an early breakfast.

It's time to head back up the main coastal road and inland through the vast Caribbean lowlands. We will stop for breakfast in [Guapiles](#), which serves as the country's gateway between the Caribbean coast and the central highlands.



Tortuguero national park

After breakfast, we will head through small towns and villages that make their living mostly from banana and pineapple harvesting, arriving at the small dock of Pavona, where our boat will bring us to the tiny island village of Tortuguero. Along the way, our captain will give us an option to observe some of the wildlife that lives along the canal.

[Tortuguero](#) is both a national park, and a village, and there are no roads here – we will travel by boat on its many canals – that's how locals get from place to place around here.

In Tortuguero we will be checking into to the [Laguna Lodge](#), its comfortable rooms surrounded by lush vegetation – and enjoy a welcome cocktail!



After checking in we will have some chill time, enjoying the swimming pool!

The main dining area is an open building with a wonderful view, decorated with rustic logs brought from the beach. The main bar is situated at the river's edge, with a deck over the water, where guests can witness the amazing sunsets enjoying a delicious drink.

It is an open construction to enjoy the beautiful view of the river, gardens, the animals and the gentle movement of the fish in the water, accompanied by the music of nature.

Later in the afternoon, after lunch, we will **visit the local village of Tortuguero**. There are no cars or streets and nature is literally bursting into town. On one side of the village, rivers and waterways beckon you to paddle deep into the jungle and experience nature unperturbed. On the other side of the village a Caribbean beach welcomes thousands of sea turtles to nest every year.



There is no guided activity here, only a chance to interact, shop, and experience this secluded Tico community. During this time you can also head to the beach and enjoy the Caribbean sands – but beware – no swimming allowed here. It is an unguarded beach with strong waves, so swimming is not recommended, not to mention stingrays, 15 foot crocodiles that enjoy entering into the salty waters and the occasional bull shark.

Spa visit: There is a jungle style [spa the Aninga a lodge near where we will be staying](#) - it offers **many 2 for 1 specials**. They will pick you up from the lodge by boat –the reception at Rana Roja can help book the spa visit if you are interested. In the past, those interested in visiting the spa went their first, and then met the rest of the group during our village visit.

Relax in the lodge: For the third time today, a meal and relaxation await our return at the lodge. Tonight we can take advantage of all amenities of the resort.

Night option- extremely recommended: Tonight you will have the option of taking a late night tour, to see the female green or Leatherback turtles, which come during this season to lay their eggs on the picturesque coast. This tour is not included in the package, and will cost extra (\$35 pp).



Thursday, August 6

Today starts early - 5:30am!

This is a day of jungle exploration in the Tortuguero National Park.

Early Morning Canoe Tour: In the early hours of the morning you will be woken up by a loud noise. What you will hear is not a trumpet or a big bell, but a natural alarm called the Howler Monkey! Drink some coffee and get ready for a very early boat ride. This is the best time to find wildlife along the majestic canals while admiring the beauty that is the Tortuguero National Park.



Tortuguero national park

Among the common species of fauna to be found are the howler, white-faced Capuchon and Spider monkeys; crocodiles; iguanas; and the blue heron, aningas, kingfishers and other type of birds. If we look closely, we may see a manatee or the Gaspar fish (considered a living fossil).

The Tortuguero National Park is one of the most varied parks in Costa Rica. It boasts high rainforests, marshy lands, long stretches of beach, and wide open canals perfect for crocodile spotting. It is also one of the most important breeding grounds for the Green Sea Turtle. The wildlife here is rich and diverse with unusually large populations of monkeys, birds, and fish.

The beaches around Tortuguero are key nesting sites for many of the world's most endangered species of sea turtles. The small village, which can be reached only by boat or airplane, is sustained in large part by eco-tourism.

Moring: A breakfast buffet will be served upon our return. After breakfast it's time to check out and make our way to Arenal!

We will be heading out the same way we entered, with our bus waiting for us at the Pavonas docks. From here, we will head to the Arenal Volcano area, stopping for lunch at Guapiles (included).

In late afternoon, we will be arriving in the [Baldi Hot Springs](#) where we will experience one of the world's most amazing offerings. Here you 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. You will spend the later part

of the day here, enjoying all that Baldi has to offer – a great way to relax after our long and adventurous week. After a group havdalla, we will enjoy an extensive buffet dinner!

What to bring: Swimming suit, bug repellent, camera, binoculars, hiking boots or tennis shoes and rain gear.



Tonight, we will be checking into our home for the next 3 nights: [Finca Luna Nueva Lodge](#).

Finca Luna Nueva (New Moon Farm) is a sustainable rainforest eco-lodge hotel and farm, offering an intimate experience of primary rainforest together with a [certified organic biodynamic farm](#). It is a working ginger and turmeric farm that accommodates more pigs, goats and water buffalo than people. Here, you will experience the Costa Rican rainforest, learn about the farm's sustainable practices and relax in rustic yet luxurious accommodations!



Friday, August 7

Morning activity: Zipline canopy adventure!

After a scrumptious breakfast, it's time to head for the canopy!

We will be departing the farm at 9:30 am

If you like to experience a unique adrenalin filled sensation, come travel with us on one of the attractions that make Costa Rica famous at a worldwide level!

Arenal Ecoglide Park is one of Costa Rica's newest adventure parks. Its canopy is built following the highest standards, approved by I.C.T. (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo) and insured by I.N.S. (Instituto Nacional de Seguros) providing major security to its customers.



Arenal Ecoglide Park is known for having two separate cables, the first cable is the one you glide on, the second is for major safety precautions. The canopy consists of 13 cables and 15 platforms which are divided into three sections that are found mostly in the trees, which are designed to provide our visitors greater contact with nature.

On our tour you will find one of our major attractions the Tarzan Swing, which guarantees you will have the greatest adventure.

The canopy tour not only offers you a great adventure but also an opportunity to observe all the animal life in its natural habitat. Each platform has been designed so that you can observe the forest from different angles allowing you to photograph the impressive scenery.

The first section has 8 cables and 9 platforms, with lengths from 10 meters up to 110 meters.

The second section has 5 cables and 6 platforms, with lengths from 100 meters up to 430 meters. At the end of this section you will find the Tarzan Swing.

After the zipline activity, we will all go to La Fortuna, the town that is the center of the Arenal Volcano region for lunch. Lunch is on our own, and not included – there are many good options around here.

This afternoon, after returning to Finca Luna Nueva we will take a tour of the farm, and learn about what keeps the crops healthy, from the happy water buffalo to the wiggling worms in the compost. Stroll through the biointensive garden, where you will taste numerous plants and herbs, the same ones served daily in the farm's restaurant!

After this it is time to rest up a bit or chill by the pool or solar heated Jacuzzi with a drink (this place is famous for its ginger smoothies!), and prepare for Shabbat.

Tonight we will enjoy an excellent organic Shabbat dinner, served in the [farms restaurant](#).

If some of us are in the mood for it, a short night hike of the surrounding rainforest (there is a short self guided hike right near the farm) can be arranged to discover its unique nocturnal denizens.

Saturday, August 8

Today is Shabbat, and you will have options to rest and laze around the farm, chill by the pool, or take a walk around the area!

This morning, we will be offering a fascinating tour of the [Sacred Seeds Sanctuary](#) at Luna Nueva, a dynamic collection of medicinal plants that protects and celebrates not only biological diversity in Costa Rica and the tropics, but also the diversity of cultural knowledge related to these plants worldwide. Housing over 275 tropical plants, this collection is a delight for anyone interested in botany, herbal medicine, or indigenous culture. Of course, you will not only look, but also get to taste and smell some of these plants – and senior guide and founder **Steven Farrell** (in photo). Read more about the farm in this [article from the Tico Times](#).



The tour will be followed by some chill time - to relax in the ozonated swimming pool or solar powered hot-tub, to drink an amazing, locally sourced papaya-turmeric-vanilla-ginger smoothie, or practice some yoga.

Lunch will be taken poolside in the amazing [restaurant](#) , all organic and locally produced!

Afternoon: Time to put on your rubber boots, and head on the [Cavalonga Trail hike](#), through amazing primary rainforest. The experienced guide will take you through the

trails, which are connected to the 50,000 acre Children's Eternal Rainforest via a biological corridor. On your way, you will see many nocturnal animals, and learn about the various trees and plants.

Option for Saturday afternoon: Arenal Volcano Hike

Today we will have an option to visit the volcano – depending on how the day goes and how you feel. This trip is not included in the tour, and those choosing to go have to cover the entry fee of \$15 pp. This hike will most likely be during the same time as our morning or afternoon activities.

Description of the hike: Before the active period of 1968, a lavish canopy of vegetation covered the Arenal Volcano. People that climbed Arenal's summit related that inside the crater there were big trees and at night, they slept in places where there was some heat due to small steam outlets. Right now the green area is located at the east side of the Mountain, and other little green parts can be seen on the north and the south of the volcano. Enjoy the most extraordinary view of the Arenal Volcano on a gentle Hike along the base of this marvelous



Arenal Volcano

“Mountain of Fire”. The Hike begins in one the trails close to the volcano, this trail 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.

Recommendations for the hike: light clothes, hiking shoes, sun lotion, repellent, camera, binoculars and raincoat.

Tonight we will gather under the stars for Havdallah, and enjoy our last evening surrounded by the magnificent rainforest!

Sunday, August 9

Time to say goodbye!

We will leave the farm by 8:00 am, in time to make our flights back home (we need to be at airport two hours in advance) – the first flight of the group is at 12:30 pm, while those with later flights will have a few more hours to say goodbye!

*****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

Guides

For your Costa Rica Experience, Greener Travel will provide you with an experienced group leader that will escort you for the length of your trip (Director Ami Greener), as well as a local Tico guide (Gustavo Ortiz) In various activities, we use 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 Toyota Coaster minibus, as well as comfortable boat transfers in Tortuguero.

Entry Requirements

A valid passport is required for all visitors to Costa Rica. Airlines traveling to Costa Rica require a **passport valid for at least 6 months after the initial flight date** in order to board the flight. US and Canadian citizens do not need a tourist visa to enter the country. Visitors from all other nationalities should check with the Costa Rican Embassy.

Weather

Weather on the trips should be warm and comfortable. San Jose is 75 -85 f during the day, though it cools off a *bit* at night. The coast should be a bit hotter. It is Costa Rica, and it can rain, so **please bring a poncho or a light and breathable rain coat.**

Health Concerns

No immunizations, shots, inoculations or vaccinations are required to enter Costa Rica.

Electricity

Costa Rica has the same electric system as the United States. Electric outlets are 120 volts / 60 Hz.

Water

Drinking tap water is safe in Costa Rica, though the water on the coast (Caribbean) has an aftertaste and visitors tend to buy bottled water. We suggest you purchase a big water jug when you reach the coast (1 gallon) and use it to refill a smaller bottle – it saves money and is better for the environment. The places where we will be staying can provide fridges where you will be able to chill your water and store food.

Currency

The Costa Rican currency is the colón (cólores in plural), and the exchange rate is about 535 to one USD. You can change dollars at the airport, or just use a bank/credit card and withdraw money at the airport. ATMs can be found all over Costa Rica. Keep in mind that there is a few dollars fee for international withdrawals, though from experience it could be safer to travel with a bank card then with a large sum of cash that can get lost/stolen. The hotels you will be staying in will have safes where we can leave valuables and passports during the day.

Packing + laundry: please pack light!

I was reminded by the bus driver and especially the river boat captain to ask you to pack light, as the boats really have limited space. As noted, we will have access to laundry during the trip, and will do a group laundry in Puerto Viejo (for a small additional cost per kg).

Phones / communications / wi-fi during the trip

Phones: most US phones (specifically ATT + T-Mobile that use GSM) will have reception in Costa Rica, though **calls on roaming will be expensive** – but you will still be able to use them to text. You can also contact your provider about a specific roaming plan. T-Mobile has unlimited data as long as you stay with your plans limit (3GB, 5GB etc.) It is 2G or 3G instead of 4g abroad, but is great for travelers. Also, with T-mobile calls to US (and all other international calls) are now 20 cents a minute, and text to US phones are free!

If you want to have a local cell number, you can get a GSM phone chip from the ICE booth near the exit from customs when you land (ICE is Costa Rica's phone and electric company). You can buy chips in \$5, \$10 or \$20. You can use most any old and unlocked T-mobile or AT&T phone that uses the GSM technology. This will allow you to receive and make local calls and calls to the US (at a far cheaper rate than using your US phone on roaming). **The Costa Rica country code is 506.**

I will have two local phones during the trip, one will be for me, and the other for group use for local calls / emergency, as well as for times we split up and need to stay in communication.

Smartphones: You can also purchase a data sim from the ICE booth at the airport for a Smartphone (phone needs to be GSM able and unlocked). Some blackberries (usually ATT & T-Mobile) work in Costa Rica with no need to buy a sim, but please check with your providers about paying in advance for international email coverage (about \$5 per week).

Wifi: Most if not all the places we will stay in have wi-fi (at least in public areas), so you would be able to connect via most Smartphones. I would not advise to bring an expensive tablet or laptop on the trip (though for logistical purposes I will be bringing a netbook)

Contact throughout the trip:

Ami Greener Costa Rica cell: (506) 8413-1831. I will have a local cell with me in Costa Rica during the entire trip – I will be turning my phone on when I arrive on Thursday, July 30th. You can give this phone number as an emergency contact for family/friends.

Ami Greener US cell: [+1-646-469-9743](tel:+16464699743) (will be on in limited mode, to use for texting from US phones – best way to contact me in case of delay/emergency)

Ami Greener Smartphone: best way to keep in touch from the US – my Galaxy will be in roaming mode in Costa Rica, so I can see and reply to emails you send.

Arrival and pickup from airport

We have arranged for you to be picked up by a private driver or by the Interbus shuttle service (depending on your time of arrival) . Interbus is like Super Shuttle, a shared ride with other tourists that will bring you to the hotel. **Please look for individual email regarding your pickup!**

When a passenger is picked up at the airport, an Interbus representative meets the passengers at the International Arrivals area, helps the passengers with their luggage and guides them to the vehicle.

Leaving migration, go to the exit door at the right side and look for the official identified with the INTERBUS sign who will give you instructions. This representative always carries a sign and wears the official uniform. He will not ask for a ticket or voucher. Check their logo to the right/website:



<https://www.interbusonline.com/home/home.asp>

The waiting time for transport to the hotel can vary, being usually less than 30 minutes, approximately. Interbus service will wait for you at the airport one hour maximum after the flight arrives.

In case you cannot find the representative, please contact me or Interbus on their toll free number in Costa Rica Tel: 800-SHUTTLE or [+\(506\) 2283-5573](tel:+50622835573), from any local number / payphone. Operation Department will gladly help you with.

This week, I will send you an individual email with a confirmation number for your pickup – please print this out and bring it for your record.

If for any reason your flight is delayed/cancelled/late, please do all you can to let me know via my contact info (listed above) you can text my US cell, email me or call my local cell.

You will be driven to the hotel, where the staff will be expecting you. If I will be out, I will leave a note with reception about when I will be back – my guess is that, depending on when you arrive, you might want to rest up and maybe see some of the downtown of San Jose.

In any case, here is the hotel info where we will be staying:

Hotel Palma Real

(+506) 2290-5060

<http://www.hotelpalmareal.com/content/>

200 Mts. North of ICE, Sabana Norte, San José de Costa Rica

Arrival times

Below are your arrival times. Brooke, Daniel and Vitaliy will be arriving together on the 1:18 from Miami, and will be picked up by a private driver, as will Amy, who is arriving later and will be taken directly to the synagogue. Shaina, Joshua and Toni will be picked up by Interbus.

Thursday, July 30

Ami and Brian - arrive separately and do not need pickup

Friday, July 31

Shaina Fine : UA1080 from EWR - 10:35 AM

Joshua Finkelstein: Jet Blue 1695 from MCO - 12:05 PM

Toni Fried : AA 1153 from MIA - 12:11 PM

Brooke Feldman : US/AA 1592 from MIA - 13:18 PM

Daniel Small : US/AA 1592 from MIA - 13:18 PM

Vitaliy Anatolenko: US/AA 1592 from MIA - 13:18 PM

Amy Papas: US/AA 1031 from MIA - 18:33 PM – will be taken directly to Bnai Israel synagogue with a private driver

The cost of the trip includes:

- **Transportation and transfers to and from all locations in Costa Rica by a bilingual guide/driver.**
- **Full accompaniment by a Greener Travel staff person and a local guide.**
- **8/9 nights of double occupancy accommodations in family run hotels and lodges.**
- **Meals included in trip: 8-9 breakfasts, 5 lunches and 7-8 dinners!**
- **Many adventure and cultural activities!**
- **Welcome dinner in Chateau 1525 in San Jose**
- **San Jose historical walk and visit to a museum or the National Theater**
- **All inclusive stay in the Laguna lodge in Tortuguero**
- **Canal Tour and tour of village in Tortuguero**
- **Chocolate making workshop and demonstration with the BriBri indigenous, medicinal plant tuour community + visit to Volio waterfall in south Caribbean**
- **Caribbean kosher-style cooking class**

- Gandoca –Manzanillo Wildlife Hike in the south Caribbean
- Dinner at Pita Bonita in Puerto Viejo
- One day of amazing whitewater rafting on the Pacuare River (including breakfast/lunch)
- 3 yours and meals during our three days at Finca Luna Nueva.
- Jungle Canopy / Zipline Adventure
- Arenal volcano hike + visit to the Baldi hotspringd

The cost does not include:

- Airfare
- Costa Rica departure tax of \$28
- Optional arrival on Friday, August 9: Shabbat experience in San Jose
- Traveler/health insurance
- Some meals on the Caribbean coast and in San Jose
- Optional late night turtle nesting tour in Tortuguero
- Visit to the Jaguar Rescue Center in Puerto Viejo
- Option al tours to the Poas and Arenal volcanos
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tips and gratuities

Our tours are organized by 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 and lodge owners, activity outfitters and non profits), 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.