

21-Day Road Trip Itinerary

Option A

COSTA RIDER
CAMPERVAN



Volcanoes, Two Coasts & Deep Costa Rica

This 21-day itinerary is made for travelers who want to explore Costa Rica slowly and deeply, crossing the country from volcanic highlands to surf coasts, cloud forests, and the Caribbean.

Designed for independent travelers, campervans, and 4x4 adventurers, it blends iconic landscapes, scenic drives, and relaxed beach towns for a true cross-country experience.



Scroll down and explore what this itinerary has in store for you.

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Day 1 – Alajuela → Arenal Volcano Area

Driving time: approx. 3–3.5 hours

Begin your journey by heading north toward the Arenal region. Today is about settling into the road trip rhythm and enjoying the lush scenery of Costa Rica's northern lowlands.

Things to do:

- Scenic drive through **farmlands** and **small towns**.
- Grocery stop in **La Fortuna**.
- Afternoon viewpoints around **El Castillo** or a short nature walk.



Where to sleep:

Camper-friendly campsite near La Fortuna or Arenal.
We recommend **Camping y Mirador El Castillo**.

Day 2 – Arenal Volcano & Thermal Experience

A day focused on contrasts: volcanic landscapes in the morning and deep relaxation in the afternoon.

Things to do:

- Walk lava trails at the **1968 Trail** or **Arenal Volcano National Park**.
- Visit **La Fortuna Waterfall** or the local swimming spot **El Salto**.
- Evening soak in **natural hot springs**.

Optional activities:

- Thermal baths at **EcoTermales** or **Baldi Hot Springs**.
- Ziplining with **Sky Adventures**.



Where to sleep:

Same area near Arenal / La Fortuna

Day 3 – Arenal → Lake Arenal → Río Celeste

Driving time: approx. 4–5 hours

Leave Arenal and drive around Lake Arenal, one of the most scenic routes in the country. Continue north toward Tenorio Volcano National Park, home of Costa Rica's famous blue river.

Things to do:

- Scenic viewpoints around **Lake Arenal**.
- Hike to **Río Celeste Waterfall** in Tenorio Volcano National Park.
- Explore the “**Teñideros**” where the river turns blue.



Where to sleep:

Near Río Celeste / Bijagua area.

We recommend **Adventure Camping La Bijagua**

Day 4 – Río Celeste → Llanos de Cortés → Playa Brasilito

Driving time: approx. 4–5 hours

Today you transition from rainforest to dry tropical forest as you head toward Guanacaste's coastline, with refreshing waterfall stops along the way.

Things to do:

- Morning nature walk near **Río Celeste**.
- Swim at **Llanos de Cortés Waterfall** (Bagaces).
- Sunset arrival at **Playa Brasilito**.



Where to sleep:

Near Brasilito or Flamingo area. We recommend **Camping La Odisea**.

Day 5 – Northern Guanacaste Beaches

A full day dedicated to exploring some of Guanacaste's most unique beaches, each with a different vibe.

Things to do:

- Morning at **Playa Brasilito**.
- Walk or swim at **Playa Conchal**, known for its shell sand.
- Afternoon in **Tamarindo** for surf, cafés, and beach life.

Optional activities:

- Surf lessons with **Witch's Rock Surf Camp** or **Tamarindo Surf School**
- Catamaran tours with **Panache Sailing** or **Marlin del Rey**



Where to sleep:

Same area near **Playa Brasilito**.

Day 6 – Coastal Drive to Playa Sámará

Driving time: approx. 3–4 hours

Follow the Nicoya Peninsula coastline south, discovering beaches that feel increasingly remote and local.

Things to do:

- Beach stops at **Playa Avellanas** or **Playa San Juanillo**.
- Lunch in a small seaside town.
- Sunset walk along **Playa Sámará**.



Where to sleep:

Near Playa Sámará. We recommend **Nieves Surf Camping**

Day 7 – Slow Day in Sámará

A pause in the journey to enjoy calm waters, relaxed town life, and ocean activities.

Things to do:

- **Swimming** and **beach time** (ideal for all levels).
- **Kayak** or **snorkel** in the bay.
- **Explore** cafés and local restaurants.

Optional activities:

- **Kayak tours** with **Octopus Tours** or **Samara Kayak & SUP**.
- **Yoga session** at **Locanda Yoga** or **Samara Yoga**.



Where to sleep:

Same area near **Playa Sámará**

Day 8 – Sámará → Santa Teresa / Mal País

Driving time: approx. 5–6 hours

A true adventure day. Cross the Nicoya Peninsula inland, passing rural towns and less-traveled roads before reaching the Pacific surf coast.

Things to do:

- Scenic drive through **Nicoya** and **rural Guanacaste**.
- Stops at small local sodas.
- Sunset arrival at **Santa Teresa** or **Mal País**.



Where to sleep:

Santa Teresa or **Mal País** area. We recommended: **Rancho Victoria Coyote Guanacaste**

Day 9 – Santa Teresa / Mal País

A full day to enjoy one of Costa Rica's most iconic surf and bohemian destinations.

Things to do:

- Surf or beach time at **Playa Santa Teresa** or **Playa Carmen**.
- Visit **Cabuya Island Cemetery** (low tide access).
- Sunset at **Playa Mal País**.

Optional activities:

- **Surf lessons** with local surf schools
- **Yoga** or **wellness** classes in Santa Teresa



Where to sleep:

Same area in **Santa Teresa / Mal País**

Day 10 – Santa Teresa → Monteverde

Driving time: approx. 4–5 hours

Leave the coast and climb into the mountains toward the cloud forest. Expect cooler temperatures and winding roads.

Things to do:

- Scenic **mountain drive**.
- Afternoon walk in **Monteverde town**.
- Sunset viewpoints over the **Gulf of Nicoya**.



Where to sleep:

Monteverde or **Santa Elena** area. We recommend **Camping Turín**

Day 11 – Monteverde Cloud Forest Experience

A day immersed in misty forests, wildlife, and cooler mountain air.

Things to do:

- Visit **Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve** or **Santa Elena Reserve**.
- Hanging bridges at **Sky Walk Monteverde**.
- **Night walk** to spot nocturnal wildlife.

Optional activities:

- Ziplining with **Selvatura** or **Sky Adventures Monteverde**.



Where to sleep:

Same area near Monteverde

Day 12 – Monteverde → Quepos

Driving time: approx. 4–5 hours

Descend from the cloud forest toward the Central Pacific, with changing landscapes from mountains to tropical lowlands.

Things to do:

- Scenic descent with panoramic viewpoints.
- Stop for lunch along the route.
- Afternoon arrival in **Quepos**.



Where to sleep:

Quepos or **Manuel Antonio** area.
We recommended **Brisas del Río Horseback Adventure**.

Day 13 – Manuel Antonio National Park

One of Costa Rica's most iconic national parks, combining wildlife-rich trails with beautiful beaches.

Things to do:

- Early visit to **Manuel Antonio National Park**.
- Wildlife spotting along easy jungle trails.
- Relax at **Playa Manuel Antonio** or **Playa Espadilla Sur**.

Optional activities:

- Guided wildlife tour with **Manuel Antonio Nature Tours** or **Jade Tours**.



Where to sleep:

Same area near **Quepos**

Day 14 – Quepos → Uvita (Southern Pacific)

Driving time: approx. 1.5–2 hours

Continue south along the Pacific coast toward a less-developed and more wild region.

Things to do:

- Visit **Nauyaca Waterfalls** or **Catarata Uvita**.
- Explore **Marino Ballena National Park** and its famous whale-tail sandbar.
- Sunset at **Playa Uvita**, **Playa Hermosa** (Uvita), or **Playa Arco**.



Where to sleep:

Uvita or **Dominical** area. We recommended **Camping Casalta**.

Day 15 – Uvita → Puerto Jiménez / Drake Bay

Driving time: approx. 4–6 hours

Today's drive leads deep into Costa Rica's southern zone, entering one of the most biodiverse regions in the country.

Things to do:

- Scenic coastal and jungle drive.
- Afternoon arrival to the **Osa Peninsula**.
- Short walk around **Puerto Jiménez** or **Drake Bay**.



Where to sleep:

Puerto Jiménez or **Drake Bay** area.
We recommended **Camping Cacao Beach**.

Day 16 – Corcovado National Park

Driving time: approx. 1.5–2 hours

A highlight of the journey and one of the most biologically intense places on Earth.

Things to do:

- Guided hike inside **Corcovado National Park**.
- **Wildlife spotting** including monkeys, tapirs, and tropical birds.



Where to sleep:

Same area in the **Osa Peninsula**.

Day 17 – Osa Peninsula → San Isidro del General

Driving time: approx. **5–6 hours**

Leave the jungle behind and climb into the highlands via **Cerro de la Muerte**.

Things to do:

- Scenic mountain drive through coffee-growing regions.
- Visit **Los Quetzales National Park**.
- Short cloud forest hikes along rivers and trails.



Where to sleep:

San Gerardo de Dota area.

We recommended **Hacienda la Lucha**

Day 18 – San Gerardo de Dota → Puerto Viejo (Caribbean Coast)

Driving time: approx. **6–7 hours**

A long but rewarding cross-country drive, ending on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast.

Things to do:

- Scenic drive across the **Central Valley**.
- Afternoon arrival in **Puerto Viejo**.
- First swim in the **Caribbean Sea**.



Where to sleep:

Puerto Viejo area.

We recommended **Campin Icaco Limón**

Day 19 – Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge

Explore one of the most beautiful coastal jungle areas on the Caribbean side.

Things to do:

- Jungle hike to **Punta Mona**.
- **Swim** and **relax** at beaches inside the refuge.
- **Snorkeling** when sea conditions allow.

Optional activities:

- Guided hike with **Manzanillo Adventures** or local certified guides.



Where to sleep:

Same area near **Puerto Viejo**.

Day 20 – Cahuita National Park & Caribbean Beaches

A relaxed day combining wildlife, coastal trails, and Caribbean culture.

Things to do:

- Walk the coastal trail in **Cahuita National Park**.
- Swimming at **Playa Blanca** or **Playa Negra**.
- Explore **Cahuita town** and local food spots.



Where to sleep:

Same area near **Puerto Viejo**.

Day 21 – Puerto Viejo → Alajuela

Driving time: approx. 5–6 hours

The final drive returns you to the Central Valley, closing a full cross-country Costa Rica road trip.

Things to do:

- Morning drive back to Alajuela.
- Return vehicle and end of journey.

Good to Know

This itinerary is designed for **campervan or 4x4 travel**, offering flexibility, comfort, and access to a wide variety of landscapes and locations across Costa Rica.

- **Road Conditions**

Some roads, especially near beaches and waterfalls, may be unpaved. A 4x4 vehicle is recommended for added comfort and confidence.

- **Driving Times**

Driving times are approximate and may vary depending on weather conditions, road conditions, traffic, and stops along the route.

- **Flexible Activities**

All activities mentioned are suggestions and can be adapted based on travel pace, personal interests, and local conditions during the trip.

Pura vida
and happy road trip!