

21-Day Road Trip Itinerary

Option B

COSTA RIDER
CAMPERVAN



Fire, Forests & Two Coasts

This 21-day road trip is for travelers who want to explore Costa Rica slowly and deeply, crossing the country from volcanic regions and cloud forests to the Pacific and Caribbean coasts.

Ideal for campervan and 4x4 travelers seeking freedom, scenic drives, wildlife, and diverse landscapes.



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

COSTA RIDER
CAMPERVAN

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

Day 7 – Slow Day in Sámara

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 Sámara**

Day 8 – Sámara → 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 recommend **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 → Orosi Valley

Driving time: approx. **3–4 hours**

A scenic drive through mountains and coffee regions.

Things to do:

- Coffee plantations along the way.
- Visit **Orosi Church**.
- Stop at the **Orosí Viewpoint (Mirador de Orosí)**.



Where to sleep:

Orosí Valley area.

We recommend **Orosi Camping**.

Day 19 – Irazú Volcano / Turrialba → La Pavona

Driving time: approx. 4-5 hours

From the high-altitude volcanic landscapes of Irazú Volcano National Park and the Turrialba region, the route descends toward the Caribbean lowlands, where cooler mountain air gives way to warmer temperatures, lush greenery, and river-lined roads near La Pavona.

Things to do:

- Visit **Irazú Volcano National Park**.
- Drive east toward **La Pavona**.



Where to sleep:

La Pavona area or lodge parking

Day 20 – Tortuguero National Park

Spend the day exploring the winding canals and lush rainforest of Tortuguero National Park, where boat rides reveal monkeys, sloths, caimans, and tropical birds, and the slow rhythm of the Caribbean side offers a completely different perspective of Costa Rica.

Things to do:

- Boat transfer to **Tortuguero**.
- Canal wildlife **tour**.
- Visit **Tortuguero village**.



Where to sleep:

Tortuguero area (lodge or designated camping)

Day 21 – Tortuguero → Alajuela

Driving time: approx. 4–5 hours

Return to the Central Valley to complete the journey.

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!