

Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| INTRODUCTION | 9 |
| FACTS ABOUT THE COUNTRY | 13 |
| History | 13 |
| Geography | 17 |
| Climate | 19 |
| Flora & Fauna..... | 20 |
| National Parks..... | 25 |
| Government | 32 |
| Economy | 33 |
| Population..... | 34 |
| People..... | 34 |
| Culture..... | 35 |
| Religion..... | 35 |
| Language..... | 36 |
| FACTS FOR THE VISITOR | 40 |
| Visas & Embassies | 40 |
| Customs | 43 |
| Money..... | 44 |
| When to Go | 47 |
| What to Bring | 47 |
| Tourist Offices | 49 |
| Business Hours & Holidays | 50 |
| Post & Telecommunications..... | 50 |
| Time | 52 |
| Electricity..... | 52 |
| Laundry..... | 52 |
| Weights & Measures..... | 53 |
| Books | 53 |
| Maps | 56 |
| Media..... | 57 |
| Film & Photography | 57 |
| Health..... | 58 |
| Women Travellers | 63 |
| Dangers & Annoyances | 64 |
| Activities | 66 |
| Accommodation..... | 66 |
| Food | 68 |
| Drinks..... | 69 |
| Things to Buy..... | 70 |
| GETTING THERE & AWAY | 72 |
| Air..... | 72 |
| Land..... | 77 |
| Sea..... | 80 |
| Tours | 81 |
| Leaving Costa Rica..... | 81 |
| GETTING AROUND | 83 |
| Air..... | 83 |
| Bus..... | 84 |
| Train..... | 85 |
| Taxi..... | 85 |
| Car & Motorbike | 86 |
| Bicycle | 88 |
| Hitching | 88 |
| Boat..... | 89 |
| Local Transport..... | 90 |
| Tours..... | 90 |
| SAN JOSÉ | 93 |
| CENTRAL VALLEY & THE HIGHLANDS | 139 |
| The Alajuela Area | 141 |
| Alajuela..... | 141 |
| Ojo de Agua..... | 143 |
| The Butterfly Farm..... | 143 |
| La Guácima | 144 |
| West to Atenas | 144 |
| North-west to Zarcero | 145 |
| Grecia | 145 |
| Sarchí..... | 146 |
| San Ramón | 147 |
| Los Angeles Cloud Forest | 147 |
| Palmares | 148 |
| Zarcero..... | 148 |
| Laguna Fraijanes Area..... | 148 |
| Parque Nacional Volcán Poás | 148 |
| Catarata La Paz..... | 150 |
| The Heredia Area | 151 |
| Heredia..... | 151 |
| Around Heredia | 153 |
| Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo | 156 |
| Moravia..... | 159 |
| Coronado | 159 |
| Los Juncos | 160 |
| Rancho Redondo | 160 |
| The Cartago Area | 160 |
| Cartago..... | 160 |
| Parque Nacional Volcán Irazú | 162 |
| Lankester Gardens | 164 |
| Río Orosi Valley..... | 164 |
| Refugio Nacional de Fauna Silvestre Tapantí..... | 165 |
| The Turrialba Area | 166 |
| Río Reventazón..... | 166 |
| Turrialba..... | 167 |
| CATIE | 169 |
| Monumento Nacional Guayabo | 170 |
| Volcán Turrialba..... | 171 |
| Rancho Naturalista..... | 171 |
| Río Pacuare | 172 |
| NORTH-WESTERN COSTA RICA | 173 |
| Interamericana Norte | 173 |
| Refugio Silvestre de Peñas Blancas | 175 |
| Reserva Biológica Isla de Los Pájaros | 175 |
| Monteverde..... | 176 |
| Reserva Biológica Bosque Nuboso Monteverde | 184 |
| Reserva Santa Elena | 188 |
| Juntas | 188 |
| Tempisque Ferry | 189 |
| Cañas..... | 190 |
| Hacienda La Pacífica | 191 |
| Río Corobicí..... | 192 |
| Bagaces | 193 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|------------|
| Parque Nacional Palo Verde..... | 194 | Area Recreativa Bahía | | The Arenal Route..... | 212 |
| Reserva Biológica Lomas | | Junquillal..... | 208 | Ciudad Quesada..... | 212 |
| Barbudal..... | 196 | Parque Nacional Guanacaste.. | 208 | Fortuna..... | 214 |
| The Volcán Miravalles Area..... | 197 | Refugio Nacional de Fauna | | West of Fortuna..... | 218 |
| Liberia..... | 197 | Silvestre Isla Bolaños..... | 211 | Volcán Arenal..... | 218 |
| Parque Nacional Rincón de La | | La Cruz..... | 211 | Arenal..... | 220 |
| Vieja..... | 201 | Puerto Soley..... | 212 | Tilarán..... | 221 |
| Parque Nacional Santa Rosa...204 | | Peñas Blancas..... | 212 | Laguna de Arenal..... | 223 |

THE NORTHERN LOWLANDS..... 224

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|-----|
| The Caño Negro Area..... | 224 | Los Chiles..... | 229 | Lodges West of Puerto Viejo.. | 235 |
| Muelle San Carlos..... | 226 | San José to Puerto Viejo | 231 | Lodges North of Puerto Viejo | 237 |
| San Rafael (de Guatuso) Area | 227 | Western Route..... | 231 | La Selva..... | 238 |
| Upala..... | 227 | Eastern Route..... | 232 | Rara Avis..... | 240 |
| Refugio Nacional de Vida | | Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí..... | 233 | | |
| Silvestre Caño Negro..... | 228 | Around Puerto Viejo..... | 235 | | |

THE CARIBBEAN LOWLANDS..... 244

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| San José to | | Parque Nacional Tortuguero... 255 | Cahuita..... | 265 | |
| Puerto Limón..... | 246 | Tortuguero..... | 260 | Parque Nacional Cahuita..... | 272 |
| Guápiles..... | 246 | Refugio Nacional de Fauna | | Puerto Viejo de Talamanca..... | 275 |
| Guácimo..... | 246 | Silvestre Barra del Colorado.. | 262 | East of Puerto Viejo..... | 281 |
| Siquirres..... | 247 | The South Caribbean..... | 264 | Manzanillo..... | 284 |
| Puerto Limón..... | 247 | Aviarios del Caribe..... | 264 | Refugio Nacional de Vida | |
| Moín..... | 253 | Valle del Río Estrella..... | 265 | Silvestre Gandoca-Manzanillo | 284 |
| The North Caribbean..... | 254 | Reserva Biológica Hitoy | | Bribri..... | 285 |
| Parismina..... | 254 | Cerere..... | 265 | Sixaola..... | 286 |

SOUTHERN COSTA RICA..... 287

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| San José to Palmar..... | 287 | Bahía Drake..... | 299 | North Along the Golfo Dulce | 317 |
| La Ruta de Los Santos..... | 287 | Marenco..... | 302 | Playa Zancudo..... | 318 |
| Genesis II..... | 288 | Reserva Biológica Isla del | | Pavones..... | 319 |
| Albergue de Montaña Tapantí.. | 289 | Caño..... | 303 | Tiskita Jungle Lodge..... | 320 |
| Cabinas Chacón..... | 289 | Parque Nacional Corcovado... 304 | | Puerto Jiménez..... | 321 |
| Cerro de La Muerte..... | 290 | Corcovado Lodge Tent Camp | 306 | South of Puerto Jiménez..... | 323 |
| San Isidro de El General..... | 290 | Carate..... | 308 | The Far South-East..... | 325 |
| San Gerardo de Rivas..... | 293 | Palmar to Golfo Dulce | | Neily..... | 325 |
| Parque Nacional Chirripó..... | 294 | Area..... | 308 | San Vito..... | 326 |
| Buenos Aires..... | 296 | The Interamericana | | Wilson Botanical Garden..... | 328 |
| Paso Real..... | 296 | South of Palmar..... | 308 | Parque Internacional La | |
| Reserva Indígena Boruca..... | 297 | Golfito..... | 309 | Amistad..... | 329 |
| Palmar Norte & Palmar Sur...297 | | Playa Cacao..... | 315 | Paso Canoas..... | 330 |
| Palmar to Corcovado..... | 298 | Refugio Nacional de Fauna | | Isla del Coco..... | 332 |
| Sierpe..... | 298 | Silvestre Golfito..... | 316 | | |

CENTRAL PACIFIC COAST..... 333

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|
| Puntarenas..... | 333 | Hacienda Santa Marta..... | 342 | Parque Nacional Manuel | |
| Isla Tortuga..... | 340 | Reserva Biológica Carara..... | 342 | Antonio..... | 361 |
| Reservas Biológicas de Islas | | Tárcoles..... | 343 | The Road to Dominical & San | |
| Guayabo & Negritos..... | 340 | Playa Herradura..... | 344 | Isidro..... | 364 |
| Other Islands..... | 341 | Jacó..... | 344 | Hacienda Barú..... | 365 |
| Esparza..... | 341 | Jacó to Quepos..... | 351 | Dominical..... | 366 |
| Playa Doña Ana..... | 341 | Quepos..... | 351 | Uvita..... | 368 |
| Mata Limón..... | 342 | Quepos to Manuel Antonio.... | 356 | Parque Nacional Marino | |
| Dundee Ranch Hotel..... | 342 | Manuel Antonio..... | 359 | Ballena..... | 369 |

PENÍNSULA DE NICOYA 370

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| West of Liberia 372 | Playa Avellanes..... 380 | South-east Corner 391 |
| Playas del Coco 372 | Playa Junquillal..... 380 | Playa Naranjo..... 391 |
| Playa Hermosa..... 373 | Santa Cruz..... 381 | Bahía Gigante 392 |
| Playa Panamá 373 | Guaitil 382 | Paquera..... 392 |
| Nacascolo 374 | The Nicoya Area..... 382 | Refugio Nacional de Vida |
| Playa Ocotal 374 | Nicoya..... 383 | Silvestre Curú 393 |
| Santa Cruz & Surrounds 374 | Parque Nacional Barra Honda 384 | Playas Pochote & Tambor 393 |
| Filadelfia..... 374 | Río Tempisque Ferry 386 | Cóbano 394 |
| Playa Brasilito 375 | Playa Nosara 386 | Montezuma 395 |
| Playa Conchal..... 375 | Refugio Nacional de Fauna | Mal País 399 |
| Playa Flamingo..... 375 | Silvestre Ostional..... 388 | Cabuya 399 |
| Playa Potrero 376 | Bahía Garza 389 | Reserva Natural Absoluta |
| Playa Pan de Azúcar 376 | Playa Sámara 389 | Cabo Blanco..... 399 |
| Playa Tamarindo..... 377 | Playa Carrillo..... 390 | |
| Parque Nacional Marino Las | The Southern Peninsula 390 | |
| Baulas de Guanacaste..... 379 | South-west Coast..... 390 | |

APPENDIX I – TELEPHONE NUMBERS 401

GLOSSARY 404

INDEX 405

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Maps 405 | Text 405 |
|----------------|----------------|