

CIN MAR in COSTA RICA

We traveled by air & land to Costa Rica last month. We left M/V Nordic home, dockside in Hollywood, FL. Here's the how & why of Costa Rica. Marc earned & won this first class trip for (2) & we certainly took advantage of every waking hour. We loved Los Suenos Marriott Resort & Marina in Puntarenas. Here are some of the highlights!

Costa Rica, in Central America, is a country of great, natural beauty & diversity. It borders the Pacific Ocean & Caribbean Sea with Nicaragua to the north & Panama to the south. From the vast & picturesque mountains, valleys, forests, protected jungles to the beautiful flowers, plants, trees & amazing wildlife. We were lucky enough to see gigantic alligators, iguanas, sea turtles, a glimpse of a whale jumping, a white faced monkey, tons of birds, colorful butterflies & several huge sailfish!

The native Costa Rican people are genuinely warm & friendly. They take great pride in their country & culture. It's an independent democracy whose economy is primarily based on tourism, fishing, coffee, sugar & bananas. Costa Rica is the size of West Virginia with about 4.1 million people. It's highest elevation is 12,000 feet. San Jose is the capital, where the airport is. We traveled northwest of the airport, about a 2 hour bus ride through skinny, winding, mountainous paved roads. We were glad that neither of us were driving! As part of our trip & welcome to the country, we had a professional tour guide narrate our bus ride. It was most interesting & a gra-8 introduction to Costa Rica.

Our daily activities included: canoeing, snorkeling, beaching & deep sea fishing! Our own "Captain Marc" caught a 120 lb. sailfish aboard a 64' Mikelson sportfisher with a serious fighting chair. The captain & crew spoiled us all day long. It was an awesome & memorable action packed day, where catch & release allowed everyone to be a winner.

The food & its presentation was superb! We ate at the resort as well as several meals in the next town of Taco. Their style was natural & fresh! Lobster (many creative ways), huge sea bass, several varieties of ceviche, fruits & juices were just a few of our favorites. A sushi looking dessert was almost too pretty to eat. Imagine chocolate instead of soy sauce, with chop sticks! Yummy! We never had a chance to want for anything to eat or drink. Food & service surrounded us even at the beach, canoeing & snorkeling. So glad that we were active & able to burn a few calories during the day! We certainly did not have time for the fitness center.

Callones is the Costa Rican currency in both large coins & paper. The conversion rate is just about 500 to our \$1.00. Easy to use either monies almost everywhere. Shopping was very limited since we were short on time. We did buy a few fun souvenirs-flavorful coffee, candy made with coffee beans, T shirts (to prove the trip), butterflies under glass, hand painted pictures on feathers, postcards, wooden coasters, a wood trivet & bracelets native to Costa Rica. Quality, unusual & gra-8 momentous!

The weather was HOT! Day & night it was real warm & humid. During the day it was mostly overcast, which was a real blessing. We still managed to get lots of color. We had air conditioning in our hotel room which was a nice luxury. Most of the restaurants, shops & the rest of the hotel was open air. Gra-8 ambience-in a beautiful & charming setting!

The Presidential election was held on a Sunday while we were visiting. They have an unusual custom during that time. From the Friday night prior until Monday, assuming it's not a close race, no liquor is sold nor served anywhere! Everything was locked & covered up. However, our "American" group got us an exception. Kind of embarrassing since we were in their country. OK, we did indulge.

For our boating friends, we visited the marina on the adjacent grounds of our hotel. It was a gorgeous sight to see along with a helicopter pad too. Boats from all over the world, including Texas & Alaska! The rates were reasonable, especially from a Florida perspective. Chatting with a few boaters, they recommend transporting boats over rather than make the tough journey across due to the unpredictable & challenging tradewinds. We did buy a Costa Rican burgee (nautical flag) for M/V Nordic. Maybe someday she will be there?

We are grateful that we had the opportunity to visit such a gorgeous country. Hope that this email gave you a little taste of Costa Rica. We have attached a few pictures, since they are worth a thousand words.



