

Costa Rica

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax[®], a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Costa Rica is a developing nation classified as upper middle income. Located in Central America between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (south of Nicaragua and north of Panama), the climate classifications range from humid equatorial (long dry season) in the west to humid equatorial (no dry season) in the northeast.

Vaccinations

Yellow Fever

Although yellow fever does not occur in Costa Rica, an official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary.

- **Requirement:**

A certificate proving yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers aged ≥ 9 months coming from countries with risk of YF transmission (except Argentina and Panama), from Tanzania and Zambia, and with specifications for the following risk countries: Colombia (the entire country except the capital city of Bogotá and Barranquilla, Cali, Cartagena, Medellín, and San Andrés Providencia); Ecuador (applies only to Morona-Santiago, Napo, Orellana, Pastaza, Sucumbíos, and Zamora-Chinchiipe and excludes the rest of the country); Paraguay (the entire country except the capital city of Asunción); Perú (the entire country except the capital city of Lima, Cajamarca, Cuzco, Lambayeque, Piura, Tumbes, Inca Trail, and Machu Picchu); Trinidad and Tobago (the entire country except the urban areas of the capital city of Port of Spain, the island of Tobago, and travelers in transit). Note: This does not apply to airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) in risk countries.

Supplementary requirement for exit: Costa Rican authorities enforce proof of YF vaccination for residents departing Costa Rica for a country with risk of YF transmission and who intend to return to Costa Rica. This exit requirement is to supplement Costa Rica's existing entry requirement under the International Health Regulations.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—*International Travel and Health* (current online update, Country List)

(2020) Very low Malaria risk was historically due almost exclusively to *P. vivax*. Negligible or no risk of malaria transmission exists in the country.

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **A** - Very limited risk of malaria transmission. Mosquito bite prevention only.

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—*Health Information for International Travel* (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: Rare local cases in Matina Canton in Limón Province, Sarapiquí Canton in Heredia Province, and Pital District in San Carlos Canton in Alajuela Province.

- Drug resistance³ : None.
- Malaria species: *P. vivax*
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: None (practice mosquito avoidance).

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment* for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

High risk exists throughout the country, with moderate risk in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures are generally inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Other Food-Borne Illnesses

Precautions to prevent brucellosis, seafood poisoning may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Chagas' disease (American trypanosomiasis), chikungunya, dengue, leishmaniasis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, West Nile virus, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, anthrax disease, helminths, leptospirosis, marine hazards, melioidosis, sexually transmitted infections, snakebites.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Terrorism Risk

No intrinsic risk of attack by terrorist groups exists, but unforeseen attacks are possible.

Crime

High risk of violent crime (armed robbery, home invasion, sexual assault, carjacking, and murder) exists throughout the country, especially in coastal areas of Limón Province (from Tortuguero to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca) and Puntarenas Province; on main highways in Central Valley region; in San José. Theft of valuables from unattended rental vehicles is common.

High risk of petty crime exists throughout the country, especially in areas frequented by tourists, including San José (particularly the Coca Cola bus terminal, public parks, and downtown), national parks, and beaches; the following areas along the Caribbean:

Cahuita, Limón, and Puerto Viejo de Talamanca; the following areas of Puntarenas Province: Dominical, Jacó, Manuel Antonio National Park, Quepos; Cobano area (including Mal País, Montezuma, and Santa Teresa), the port of Puntarenas, and areas near the popular crocodile viewing area along the Tárcoles River near Jacó.

Express kidnappings to force cash withdrawals at ATMs may occur throughout the country.

Risk exists of robberies and/or assaults occurring after consuming intentionally drugged food or drink; tourists are frequently targeted.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations occur throughout the country, especially in San José, and are generally peaceful but have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Water Safety

Hazardous water conditions (including currents, tides, and undertows) may occur along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Heed posted warnings, and avoid beaches that are not patrolled. Do not swim alone or after dark, and do not walk on any beach after dark.

Passenger boats may be unsafe, including small crafts. Decline water transportation in vessels that appear overloaded or lack personal flotation devices or life jackets.

Basic safety standards for recreational water activities (including scuba diving and rafting) are often not in place. Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI, and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

Outdoor Safety

Basic safety standards for adventure activities (including bungee jumping and canopy tours) are often not in place. Travelers should only use reputable adventure-sport operators for activities and equipment rentals.

Other Safety Threats

Risk exists for fatal wildlife attacks from crocodiles in coastal areas of the Pacific Ocean, especially in Playa Azul, Guanacaste Province and Playa Esterillos, Puntarenas Province. Travelers should closely follow regulations from local authorities and always maintain a safe distance from wildlife.

Transportation Safety

High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is less than 10 in most high-income countries.

Speed laws are poorly enforced.

Seat belt laws are poorly enforced.

Drunk driving laws are poorly enforced.

Structural standards for vehicles may not meet international standards.

Airline Safety

The US Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the civil aviation authority of this country oversees its air carriers in accordance with minimum international safety standards.

Natural Disasters

The hurricane season is from June through November. The rainy season is from May through November. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur.

Seismic and volcanic activity frequently occurs.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Costa Rica

- United States: [+506] 2519-2000; cr.usembassy.gov

- Canada: [+506] 2242-4400; www.costarica.gc.ca
- United Kingdom: [+506] 2258-2025; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-in-costa-rica
- Australia: [+506] 4700-6400

Costa Rica's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: www.costarica-embassy.org
- In Canada: www.costaricaembassy.com
- In the U.K.: www.costaricanembassy.co.uk
- In Australia: [+02] 6113-0271

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV testing is not required to obtain a tourist, work, or residence visa.

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