

FYI Travel: Wildlife adventures are easy to find in Costa Rica

by Tom_Roebuck

Costa Rica is a wildlife lover's paradise, boasting tropical birds and exotic mammals around every corner. Only here, among miles of unspoiled beaches, rain forests, rivers and churning volcanoes, can travelers experience 12 distinct ecological zones. Teeming with biological diversity, each zone offers an opportunity to further explore the depths of Central America's tropics.

TINY TREASURE - Few places rival Costa Rica for wildlife viewing. Pictured is a poison dart frog, small in size but easy to spot. CNS photo. MASTER GUIDE - Wild Planet's Master Naturalist Guide Koky Porras (left) leads another group through the Costa Rican wilderness. He possesses the rare ability to call birds to his group. CNS photo. For nearly 17 years, Wild Planet Adventures has offered a unique focus on Costa Rica's wildlife with tours like the 14-Day "Ultimate Wildlife Eco-Tour" chosen by Fodor's travel experts as one of their "Top 10 Must-Do Trips." Due to a sold-out season in 2007, an increased number of departures are currently scheduled for 2008.

Specially arranged activities enable guests to see even more wildlife sightings. These activities include interactions with animals, wildlife experts and scientific researchers, night hikes to see nocturnal animals, safari-style paddling on flat-water rivers, hiking in eight national parks and wildlife preserves, sea kayaking with dolphins and snorkeling at night in the bioluminescence. Guests stay in rain forest lodges with access to prime wildlife viewing and modern creature comforts.

Also on display to curious travelers are the Sloth Wildlife Sanctuary, Arenal Volcano and hot springs, Monteverde Cloud Forest, the remotely secluded Sarapiquí and Puerto Viejo rivers as well as the fabled dark-sand Pacific and Caribbean beaches.

Shorter Wild Planet tours include the nine-day "Ultimate Wildlife Eco-Tour," 10-Day "Every Paddler's Dream Trip," the 10-Day "Costa Rica Explorer Tour," as well as custom-designed programs for independent travelers, small groups and families.

FYI: To reserve a space during 2008, visit www.wildplanetadventures.com.

ENGLISH TREASURES TO VISIT FLORIDA

Experience a taste of England at The Chesterfield Palm Beach hotel in Florida, when medieval and Renaissance treasures from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London will be on display at the Norton Museum of Art.

The Chesterfield's "Taste of England" package includes:

- Three days and two nights in a Deluxe King room.
- Complimentary full English breakfast for two each day.
- Two tickets to The Norton.
- Romantic dinner for two with a bottle of champagne.
- Private lesson for two at the nearby National Croquet Center.

- An afternoon English tea for two at The Chesterfield.

The "Taste of England" package is priced from \$859 for two nights, based on two people sharing a room. This package is offered from Oct. 24 to Jan. 6.

FYI: For more information or reservations, call 800-243-7871 or visit www.chesterfieldpb.com or www.redcarnation.com.

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

Dolphin Bay Hotel and Residences, central California's new coastal cliff-top resort, has created an autumn lovers' getaway, the "Escape to the Edge" package. This two-night, three-day stay will have guests stretching their limbs in a one- or two-bedroom residence ranging in size from 985-2,400 square feet, with views of the Pacific Ocean. Muscles will be massaged with treatments at La Bonne Vie Spa and hunger will be vanquished with dinner at Lido Restaurant. And to top it off, guests will hit the road in their fully cleaned and washed vehicle.

The "Escape to the Edge" package also includes a dinner gift certificate to Lido Restaurant. The value depends on accommodations: one bedroom a \$100 voucher; two bedrooms a \$200 voucher. Guests also get a choice of 60-minute spa treatments at La Bonne Vie.

Located halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, this vineyard-clad coast offers six state beaches, two nature preserves, three state parks, nine championship golf courses and the famed Hearst Castle, all within a 30-minute drive of the hotel, making it an ideal home base for travelers in the area.

Two-bedroom rates for "Escape to the Edge" package, for up to four people, are \$1,975-\$2,305 midweek; \$2,107-\$2,459 weekend. One-bedroom rates, for up to two people, are \$1,315-\$1,623 midweek, \$1,447-\$1,799 weekend.

FYI: For more information call 800-516-0112 or visit www.thedolphinbay.com.

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