



**Ecological Exploration  
in Costa Rica with Twan Leenders**  
March 27 – April 2, 2025



# Ecological Exploration in Costa Rica with Twan Leenders

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Lace up your boots and get ready to explore Costa Rica by land, air, and water with Chautauqua Travels Expert Dr. Twan Leenders. You'll visit multiple national parks and nature reserves to observe the impressive biodiversity that Costa Rica is known for – including the Cloud Forest, Tapir Valley Nature Reserve, and the Monteverde Bat Jungle. With a focus on sustainability and responsible ecological exploration throughout the program, you'll see and hear first-hand the ongoing efforts to maintain the plant and wildlife of the nation through private lectures on sustainable gastronomy, ecotourism, and engage in tree tagging in the Monteverde forest. Hikes, bikes, and adventure await!

*Note that this is a moderately active tour and includes guided hikes over uneven terrain. Anyone with a serious medical problem, whose medical situation might be adversely affected by strenuous travel, or who might have difficulty walking should not consider this trip. This journey is not accessible to wheelchairs, rollators, or scooters.*

**877.298.9677 | [reservations@academic-travel.com](mailto:reservations@academic-travel.com)**



## Trip Highlights

- Seek out wildlife by day and night to observe mammalian, avian, and amphibian species unique to Costa Rica.
- Visit nature reserves dedicated to specific species, such as the Tapir Valley Nature Reserve and Monteverde Bat Jungle.
- Hear from local entrepreneurs and researchers about sustainability efforts in tourism, gastronomy, and agriculture.
- Explore multiple regions, climates, and habitats with the guidance of Chautauqua Travels Expert Dr. Twan Leenders.



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## Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrival in Costa Rica

Arrive in Costa Rica at the Daniel Oduber Quirós International Airport in Guanacaste and take the group transfer to your hotel in Liberia.

In the early evening, gather for a welcome lecture from your Chautauqua Travels Expert Dr. Twan Leenders. You'll get a preview of the activities to come, insight into his own expertise and research in Costa Rica, and get to know your fellow travelers. Afterwards, enjoy a welcome Dinner at El Mangroove Hotel featuring traditional Costa Rican dishes emphasizing farm and ocean-to-table ingredients.

**Included Meal:** Dinner

**Accommodations:** El Mangroove Hotel

### Day 2: Tubing and Tapir Valley Nature Reserve

Journey out towards Bijagua and Rio Celeste, your home for the next few days. Take in Rio Celeste by water with a tubing tour led by expert guides who will showcase the biodiversity of the area and distinct landscapes. Debrief from your time on the water with a picnic-style lunch. From here, we'll transfer to the Celeste Mounting Lodge for time to refresh.

In the afternoon, head to Tapir Valley Nature Reserve for an exclusive tour that focuses on amphibious species, including a new species discovered within the reserve. You'll learn how the reserve was established from private property and what goes into the maintenance of ecologically-friendly spaces of Costa Rica. We'll have a small reception with the founder of the nature reserve to cap off the visit.

In the evening, you'll return to the Celest Mountain Lodge to settle in prior to dinner at the hotel.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** Celeste Mountain Lodge



### **Day 3: Treasures of Tenorio**

In the morning, head out for the day's exploration of the four different habitable zones of Tenorio Volcano National Park, one of the newest national parks in Costa Rica. A combination of walking and biking will showcase the flora, fauna, and wildlife that is protected within the park. Stop for a scenic picnic lunch within the national park, taking in the views of the Rio Celeste and (weather depending) the Tenorio Volcano.

Return to the hotel and sit down with your wildlife photography guide for a workshop on best practices in capturing the perfect shot (even with just your smartphone!) while respecting the plant and wildlife that we'll encounter throughout the rest of the program. You can walk the trails of the hotel property and put your new photography skills into practice. Afterwards, enjoy dinner at the hotel and the remainder of your evening at leisure.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** Celeste Mountain Lodge

### **Day 4: Arenal by Water and Tree Tagging in Monteverde**

After breakfast, depart from Rio Celeste to Monteverde. Board a boat and cruise on Lake Arenal around the Arenal Volcano, the nation's most active volcano (don't worry, it is currently in a resting phase). Weather dependent, we'll see the eponymous volcano and the formation of the lava rocks from previous eruptions. After disembarking, we'll continue on to lunch in a local restaurant in Monteverde. In the afternoon, we'll visit the Monteverde Institute – a non-profit educational organization dedicated to the mission of sustainable living at the local and global levels. Here you will participate hands-on in their tree tagging and reforestation efforts. We'll sit down with their avian expert for a discussion on birding, citizen science programming, and the importance of sustainable tourism practices.

Enjoy your dinner and evening at leisure.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodations:** Ocotea Boutique Hotel

### **Day 5: Monteverde: Biological Reserve and the Bat Jungle**

Get ready for an active morning. Today, you'll take a guided walk of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve. With over 750 species of mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles you are sure to witness the exceptional biodiversity of the reserve. For lovers of flora and fauna, there are more than 3000 species of plants, including 500 varieties of orchids. Fuel up at a local restaurant for lunch and an informal discussion of your in situ observations of the Cloud Forest.

Later in the day, head to Santa Elena for a fascinating tour featuring up to 11 species of live, free-flying tropical bats from the region in the Bat Jungle. This exhibit is the first of its kind in Latin America and serves to demonstrate the importance of bats for ecological balance in Monteverde. Enjoy the second lecture of the tour in a private space at the Bat Jungle with Dr. Twan Leenders.

Your dinner and evening are at leisure in Monteverde.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodations:** Ocotea Boutique Hotel



## **Day 6: Monteverde: The Continental Divide, Coffee and Chocolate**

Today, you'll take in a view of Monteverde by air. You'll begin with a gondola ride up the Continental Divide, with stops that feature the Cloud Forest, four volcanoes, the Nicoya Gulf and potentially the Guanacaste Plain (weather dependent). Once at the top, you'll have the chance to continue exploring the treetops on the hanging bridges with a guided tour. We'll end the experience with a private talk about sustainability and tourism, specifically focused on adventure tourism in Costa Rica, with owner Rodrigo Valverde Montoya.

For lunch we'll head to an area restaurant featuring traditional dishes. During the meal we'll be accompanied by Alfredo Echeverria, founder of the Foundation for Costa Rican Gastronomy, about the current efforts in sustainable gastronomy to improve the socioeconomic and cultural wellbeing of the country.

In the afternoon, enjoy a private tour of a small, family-owned business that helped to pioneer coffee production in the region. Learn about coffee production, from planting and harvesting through to brewing the perfect cup. Next you will have the opportunity to explore the parallel process of chocolate production, including making your own chocolate bar.

For the final meal together, head to a local restaurant for a farewell dinner, showcasing sustainable gastronomy and the typical Costa Rican flavors from the earlier lecture in a semi-private space.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** Ocotea Boutique Hotel

## **Day 7: Departure**

After breakfast, take advantage of the group transfer from the hotel to Liberia International airport for individual flights home in the afternoon.

**Included Meal:** Breakfast





## Your Expert



### Twan Leenders

Author, photographer, and biologist, Twan Leenders, is deeply committed to wildlife and habitat conservation. Originally from The Netherlands, he spent several years living and working in various parts of Central America, before moving to the U.S. in 2000. A former researcher at Yale University's Peabody Museum, Twan moved to Western New York in 2012 where he currently works as Director of Conservation for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy. Based on the notion that all stewardship starts with education, Twan has always been keenly interested in sharing his experiences and knowledge. He offers programs on a wide range of topics year-round. In addition, Twan has authored five books on the amphibians, reptiles, and other wildlife of Costa Rica for Cornell University Press, and has written numerous magazine and journal articles. An avid photographer and wildlife artist, his images adorn the pages of his books, as well as those of many publications by the National Geographic Society, GEO, Dorling Kindersley, and many others.

## Accommodations



### El Mangroove Hotel

El Mangroove Hotel is a boutique beachfront property on the Papagayo Gulf, located a short 20 minutes' drive from Liberia International Airport. The suites capture the tropical bohemian-chic design that characterizes El Mangroove with amenities like outdoor rain showers, indoor hammocks, plush beds, regional artwork, and contemporary finishes. All suites, which vary in size and style, have a private bathroom, Wi-Fi, flat screen cable TV, air-conditioning, mini-bar, safe, and a desk. **1 night**



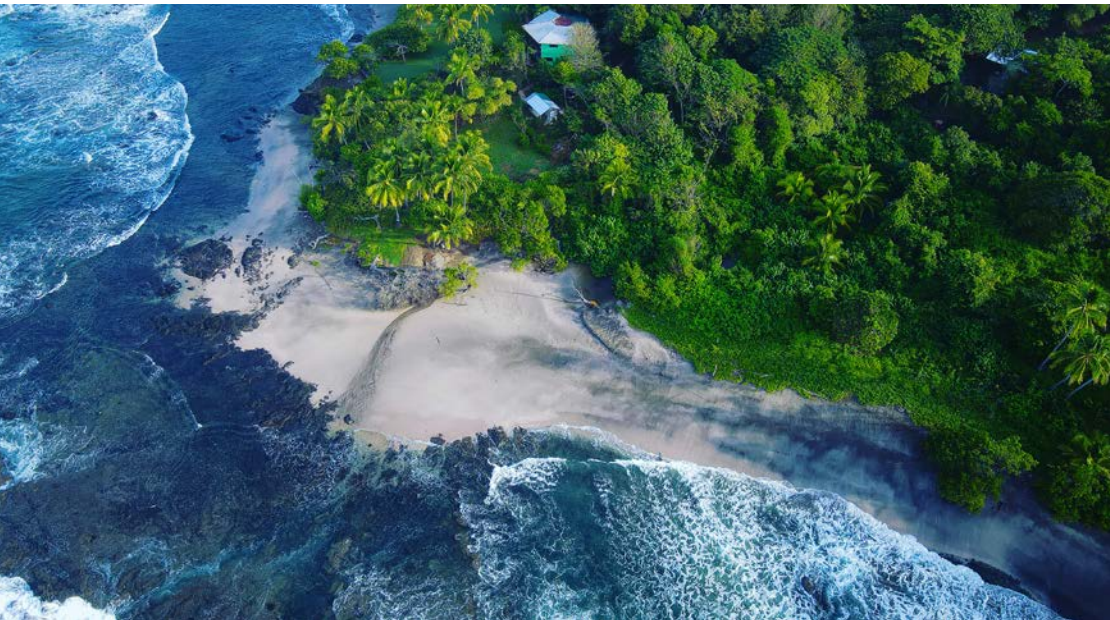
### Celeste Mountain Lodge

Celeste Mountain Lodge sits high atop a mountain that affords impressive views of the Tenorio and Miravalles volcanoes and the small village of Bijagua in the valley below. Its property of 17 acres (7 hectares) of gardens and protected primary rainforest borders other protected areas, resulting in deep jungle encompassing the lodge on three sides. The lodge's design is contemporary and innovative, built in an open-air and ecofriendly style. All 18 guest rooms, housed on two floors in one building, enjoy the same beautiful southwest views of the two volcanoes, rainforest, the valley below, the lodge's gardens, and the sunsets. **2 nights**



### Ocotea Boutique Hotel

The hotel is surrounded by the lush greenery and biodiversity that makes Monteverde famous around the world. A local family operates the property, with an extensive experience in hospitality and tourism, and a deep and abiding love for the land on which the hotel rests. Enjoy delicious and innovative dishes in the comfort of the Nectandra Restaurant or curl up on The Rooftop Bar and Cafe and marvel at the view spread out below you. Those looking to unwind from adventure can book services in the Lauracea Massage Room. **3 nights**



## Price:

Double Occupancy: \$7,595 pp

Single Occupancy: \$9,520 pp

Deposit: \$1,000

Program limited to 25 travelers.

**Book  
Today** 

## What's Included

- All accommodations for the duration of the tour
- Meals, as noted in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and visits as noted in each itinerary
- Expertise of CHQ Expert, ATA-hired tour manager and local guides throughout the tour
- All gratuities for on-tour guides, drivers, hotel and restaurant staff as part of the group program
- All on-tour transportation, unless otherwise noted
- Transfers to and from airports for those arriving or departing according to the designated itinerary
- Quietvox listening devices to facilitate audibility and social distancing on tour
- The assistance of an ATA professional travel team to assist with pre-trip questions, travel arrangements, including flights, extra hotel nights and other services
- Comprehensive pre-departure mailings and materials with information about the destination and what to expect on tour, including a suggested reading list
- Emergency evacuation insurance

[Click here to read the full terms and conditions online.](#)





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