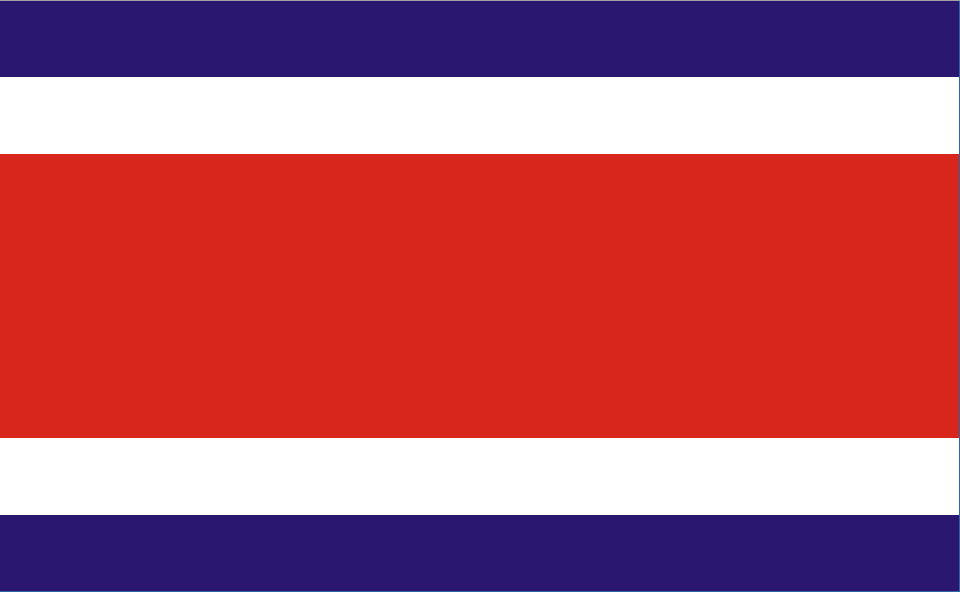




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Introduction

Costa Rica

Background: Although explored by the Spanish early in the 16th century, initial attempts at colonizing Costa Rica proved unsuccessful due to a combination of factors, including: disease from mosquito-infested swamps, brutal heat, resistance by natives, and pirate raids. It was not until 1563 that a permanent settlement of Cartago was established in the cooler, fertile central highlands. The area remained a colony for some two and a half centuries. In 1821, Costa Rica became one of several Central American provinces that jointly declared their independence from Spain. Two years later it joined the United Provinces of Central America, but this federation disintegrated in 1838, at which time Costa Rica proclaimed its sovereignty and independence. Since the late 19th century, only two brief periods of violence have marred the country's democratic development. Although it still maintains a large agricultural sector, Costa Rica has expanded its economy to include strong technology and tourism industries. The standard of living is relatively high. Land ownership is widespread.

Geography

Costa Rica

Location: Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama

Geographic coordinates: 10 00 N, 84 00 W

Map references: Central America and the Caribbean

Area: *total:* 51,100 sq km
land: 50,660 sq km
water: 440 sq km
note: includes Isla del Coco

Area - comparative: slightly smaller than West Virginia

Land boundaries: *total:* 639 km
border countries: Nicaragua 309 km, Panama 330 km

Coastline: 1,290 km

Maritime claims: *territorial sea:* 12 nm
exclusive economic zone: 200 nm
continental shelf: 200 nm

Climate: tropical and subtropical; dry season (December to April); rainy season (May to November); cooler in highlands

Terrain: coastal plains separated by rugged mountains including over 100 volcanic cones, of which several are major volcanoes

Elevation extremes: *lowest point:* Pacific Ocean 0 m
highest point: Cerro Chirripo 3,810 m

Natural resources: hydropower

Land use: *arable land*: 4.4%
permanent crops: 5.87%
other: 89.73% (2005)

Irrigated land: 1,080 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources: 112.4 cu km (2000)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural): *total*: 2.68 cu km/yr (29%/17%/53%)
per capita: 619 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards: occasional earthquakes, hurricanes along Atlantic coast; frequent flooding of lowlands at onset of rainy season and landslides; active volcanoes

Environment - current issues: deforestation and land use change, largely a result of the clearing of land for cattle ranching and agriculture; soil erosion; coastal marine pollution; fisheries protection; solid waste management; air pollution

Environment - international agreements: *party to*: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands, Whaling
signed, but not ratified: Marine Life Conservation

Geography - note: four volcanoes, two of them active, rise near the capital of San Jose in the center of the country; one of the volcanoes, Irazu, erupted destructively in 1963-65

People	Costa Rica
Population:	4,195,914 (July 2008 est.)
Age structure:	<i>0-14 years</i> : 27.2% (male 584,782/female 557,952) <i>15-64 years</i> : 66.8% (male 1,416,456/female 1,384,692) <i>65 years and over</i> : 6% (male 116,461/female 135,571) (2008 est.)
Median age:	<i>total</i> : 27.1 years <i>male</i> : 26.7 years <i>female</i> : 27.6 years (2008 est.)
Population growth rate:	1.388% (2008 est.)
Birth rate:	17.71 births/1,000 population (2008 est.)
Death rate:	4.31 deaths/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Net migration 0.48 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2008 est.)
rate:

Sex ratio: *at birth*: 1.05 male(s)/female
under 15 years: 1.05 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1.02 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.86 male(s)/female
total population: 1.02 male(s)/female (2008 est.)

Infant mortality *total*: 9.01 deaths/1,000 live births
rate: *male*: 9.92 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 8.05 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.)

Life expectancy at *total population*: 77.4 years
birth: *male*: 74.79 years
female: 80.14 years (2008 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.17 children born/woman (2008 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult 0.6% (2003 est.)
prevalence rate:

HIV/AIDS - 12,000 (2003 est.)
people living with
HIV/AIDS:

HIV/AIDS - 900 (2003 est.)
deaths:

Major infectious *degree of risk*: intermediate
diseases: *food or waterborne diseases*: bacterial diarrhea and hepatitis A
vectorborne diseases: dengue fever (2008)

Nationality: *noun*: Costa Rican(s)
adjective: Costa Rican

Ethnic groups: white (including mestizo) 94%, black 3%, Amerindian 1%, Chinese 1%,
other 1%

Religions: Roman Catholic 76.3%, Evangelical 13.7%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.3%,
other Protestant 0.7%, other 4.8%, none 3.2%

Languages: Spanish (official), English

Literacy: *definition*: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 94.9%
male: 94.7%
female: 95.1% (2000 census)

Government**Costa Rica**

Country name: *conventional long form*: Republic of Costa Rica
conventional short form: Costa Rica
local long form: Republica de Costa Rica
local short form: Costa Rica

Government type: democratic republic

Capital: *name*: San Jose
geographic coordinates: 9 56 N, 84 05 W
time difference: UTC-6 (1 hour behind Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions: 7 provinces (provincias, singular - provincia); Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Limon, Puntarenas, San Jose

Independence: 15 September 1821 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 15 September (1821)

Constitution: 7 November 1949

Legal system: based on Spanish civil law system; judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court; has accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Executive branch: *chief of state*: President Oscar ARIAS Sanchez (since 8 May 2006); First Vice President Laura CHINCHILLA (since 8 May 2006); Second Vice President (vacant); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government
head of government: President Oscar ARIAS Sanchez (since 8 May 2006); First Vice President Laura CHINCHILLA (since 8 May 2006); Second Vice President (vacant)
cabinet: Cabinet selected by the president
elections: president and vice presidents elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a single four-year term; election last held 5 February 2006 (next to be held in February 2010)
election results: Oscar ARIAS Sanchez elected president; percent of vote - Oscar ARIAS Sanchez (PLN) 40.9%; Otton SOLIS (PAC) 39.8%, Otto GUEVARA Guth (PML) 8%, Ricardo TOLEDO (PUSC) 3%

Legislative branch: unicameral Legislative Assembly or Asamblea Legislativa (57 seats; members are elected by direct, popular vote to serve four-year terms)
elections: last held 5 February 2006 (next to be held in February 2010)
election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PLN 25, PAC 17, PML 6, PUSC 5, PASE 1, PFA 1, PRN 1, PUN 1

Judicial branch: Supreme Court or Corte Suprema (22 justices are elected for renewable eight-year terms by the Legislative Assembly)

Political parties and leaders: Authentic Member from Heredia [Jose SALAS]; Citizen Action Party or PAC [Epsy CAMPBELL Barr]; Costa Rican Renovation Party or PRC [Gerardo Justo OROZCO Alvarez]; Democratic Force Party or PFD [Marco NUNEZ Gonzalez]; General Union Party or PUGEN [Carlos Alberto FERNANDEZ Vega]; Homeland First or PP [Juan Jose VARGAS Fallas]; Independent Worker Party or PIO [Jose Alberto CUBERO Carmona]; Libertarian Movement Party or PML [Otto GUEVARA Guth]; National Christian Alliance Party or ANC [Juan Carlos CHAVEZ Mora]; National Integration Party or PIN [Walter MUNOZ Cespedes]; National Liberation Party or PLN [Francisco Antonio PACHECO Fernandez]; National Patriotic Party or PPN [Daniel Enrique REYNOLDS Vargas]; National Restoration Party or PRN [Fabio Enrique DELGADO Hernandez]; National Union Party or PUN [Arturo ACOSTA Mora]; Nationalist Democratic Alliance or ADN [Jose Miguel VILLALOBOS Umana]; Patriotic Union or UP [Jose Miguel CORRALES Bolanos]; Social Christian Unity Party or PUSC [Luis FISHMAN Zonzinski]; Union for Change Party or UPC [Antonio ALVAREZ Desanti]; United Leftist Coalition or IU [Humberto VARGAS Carbonel]

Political pressure groups and leaders: Authentic Confederation of Democratic Workers or CATD (Communist Party affiliate); Chamber of Coffee Growers; Confederated Union of Workers or CUT (Communist Party affiliate); Costa Rican Confederation of Democratic Workers or CCTD (Liberation Party affiliate); Costa Rican Exporter's Chamber or CADEXCO; Costa Rican Solidarity Movement; Costa Rican Union of Private Sector Enterprises or UCCAEP [Rafael CARRILLO]; Federation of Public Service Workers or FTSP; National Association for Economic Development or ANFE; National Association of Educators or ANDE; National Association of Public and Private Employees or ANEP [Albino VARGAS]; Rerum Novarum or CTRN (PLN affiliate) [Gilbert BROWN]

International organization participation: BCIE, CACM, FAO, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICCT, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAES, LAIA (observer), MIGA, NAM (observer), OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, PCA, RG, UN, UN Security Council (temporary), UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNWTO, UPU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador Tomas DUENAS
chancery: 2114 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008
telephone: [1] (202) 234-2945
FAX: [1] (202) 265-4795
consulate(s) general: Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Tampa (temporarily closed), Washington, DC
consulate(s): San Francisco

Diplomatic representation from the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador Mark LANGDALE
embassy: Calle 120 Avenida O, Pavas, San Jose
mailing address: APO AA 34020
telephone: [506] 519-2000
FAX: [506] 519-2305

Flag description: five horizontal bands of blue (top), white, red (double width), white, and blue, with the coat of arms in a white elliptical disk on the hoist side of the red band; above the coat of arms a light blue ribbon contains the words, AMERICA CENTRAL, and just below it near the top of the coat of arms is a white ribbon with the words, REPUBLICA COSTA RICA

Economy	Costa Rica
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Economy - overview: Costa Rica's basically stable economy depends on tourism, agriculture, and electronics exports. Poverty has remained around 20% for nearly 20 years, and the strong social safety net that had been put into place by the government has eroded due to increased financial constraints on government expenditures. Immigration from Nicaragua has increasingly become a concern for the government. The estimated 300,000-500,000 Nicaraguans estimated to be in Costa Rica legally and illegally are an important source of (mostly unskilled) labor, but also place heavy demands on the social welfare system. Foreign investors remain attracted by the country's political stability and high education levels, as well as the fiscal incentives offered in the free-trade zones. Exports have become more diversified in the past 10 years due to the growth of the high-tech manufacturing sector, which is dominated by the microprocessor industry. Tourism continues to bring in foreign exchange, as Costa Rica's impressive biodiversity makes it a key destination for ecotourism. The government continues to grapple with its large internal and external deficits and sizable internal debt. Reducing inflation remains a difficult problem because of rising import prices, labor market rigidities, and fiscal deficits. Tax and public expenditure reforms will be necessary to close the budget gap. In October 2007, a national referendum voted in favor of the US-Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

GDP (purchasing power parity): \$45.77 billion (2007 est.)

GDP (official exchange rate): \$26.24 billion (2007 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 6.8% (2007 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP): \$10,300 (2007 est.)

GDP - composition by sector: *agriculture: 8.6%*
industry: 29.4%
services: 62.1% (2007 est.)

Labor force: 1.92 million
note: this official estimate excludes Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica (2007 est.)

Labor force - by occupation: *agriculture: 14%*
industry: 22%
services: 64% (2006 est.)

Unemployment rate: 4.6% (2007 est.)

Population below poverty line: 16% (2006 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share: *lowest 10%: 1%*
highest 10%: 37.4% (2003)

Distribution of family income - Gini index: 49.8 (2003)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 9.4% (2007 est.)

Investment (gross fixed): 21.6% of GDP (2007 est.)

Budget: *revenues: \$3.976 billion*
expenditures: \$3.808 billion (2007 est.)

Public debt: 46.6% of GDP (2007 est.)

Agriculture - products: bananas, pineapples, coffee, melons, ornamental plants, sugar, corn, rice, beans, potatoes; beef; timber

Industries: microprocessors, food processing, medical equipment, textiles and clothing, construction materials, fertilizer, plastic products

Industrial production growth rate: 7.3% (2007 est.)

Electricity - production: 8.349 billion kWh (2005)

Electricity - consumption: 7.776 billion kWh (2005)

Electricity - exports: 70 million kWh (2005)

Electricity - imports: 81 million kWh (2005)

Oil - production: 0 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - consumption: 43,000 bbl/day (2005 est.)

Oil - exports: 2,998 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - imports: 43,640 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - proved reserves: 0 bbl (1 January 2006 est.)

Natural gas - production: 0 cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - consumption: 0 cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - exports: 0 cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - imports: 0 cu m (2005)

Natural gas - proved reserves: 0 cu m (1 January 2006 est.)

Current account balance: -\$1.519 billion (2007 est.)

Exports: \$9.268 billion (2007 est.)

Exports - commodities: bananas, pineapples, coffee, melons, ornamental plants, sugar; seafood; electronic components, medical equipment

Exports - partners: US 24.9%, China 13.9%, Netherlands 10.6%, Mexico 6.4%, UK 5.8% (2006)

Imports: \$12.26 billion (2007 est.)

Imports - raw materials, consumer goods, capital equipment, petroleum, construction commodities: materials

Imports - partners: US 40.1%, Venezuela 5.7%, Mexico 5.7%, Japan 5.3%, China 5.1%, Brazil 4.6% (2006)

Economic aid - \$29.51 million (2005)
recipient:

Reserves of \$4.114 billion (31 December 2007 est.)
foreign exchange
and gold:

Debt - external: \$7.422 billion (30 June 2007)

Stock of direct \$8.669 billion (2007 est.)
foreign
investment - at
home:

Stock of direct \$491 million (2007 est.)
foreign
investment -
abroad:

Market value of \$1.478 billion (2005)
publicly traded
shares:

Currency (code): Costa Rican colon (CRC)

Exchange rates: Costa Rican colones per US dollar - 519.53 (2007), 511.3 (2006), 477.79 (2005), 437.91 (2004), 398.66 (2003)

Fiscal year: calendar year

Communications **Costa Rica**

Telephones - main 1.351 million (2006)
lines in use:

Telephones - 1.503 million (2007)
mobile cellular:

Telephone *general assessment*: good domestic telephone service in terms of breadth of system: coverage; restricted cellular telephone service; state-run monopoly provider is struggling with the demand for new lines, resulting in long waiting times
domestic: point-to-point and point-to-multi-point microwave, fiber-optic, and coaxial cable link rural areas; Internet service is available
international: country code - 506; landing point for the Americas Region Caribbean Ring System (ARCOS-1) fiber-optic telecommunications submarine cable and the MAYA-1 submarine cable that provide links to South and Central America, parts of the Caribbean, and the US; connected to Central American Microwave System; satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean) (2007)

Radio broadcast stations: AM 65, FM 51, shortwave 19 (2002)

Television broadcast stations: 20 (plus 43 repeaters) (2002)

Internet country code: .cr

Internet hosts: 13,792 (2007)

Internet users: 1.214 million (2006)

Transportation	Costa Rica
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Airports: 151 (2007)

Airports - with paved runways: *total*: 36
2,438 to 3,047 m: 2
1,524 to 2,437 m: 2
914 to 1,523 m: 21
under 914 m: 11 (2007)

Airports - with unpaved runways: *total*: 115
914 to 1,523 m: 19
under 914 m: 96 (2007)

Pipelines: refined products 242 km (2007)

Railways: *total*: 278 km
narrow gauge: 278 km 1.067-m gauge
note: none of the railway network is in use (2007)

Roadways: *total*: 35,330 km
paved: 8,621 km
unpaved: 26,709 km (2004)

Waterways: 730 km (seasonally navigable by small craft) (2007)

Merchant marine: *total*: 1 ship (1000 GRT or over) 1,058 GRT/255 DWT
by type: passenger/cargo 1 (2008)

Ports and terminals: Caldera, Puerto Limon

Military

Costa Rica

Military branches: no regular military forces; Ministry of Public Security, Government, and Police (2008)

Manpower available for military service: *males age 16-49*: 1,134,205
females age 16-49: 1,095,763 (2008 est.)

Manpower fit for military service: *males age 16-49*: 958,013
females age 16-49: 925,727 (2008 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually: *males age 16-49*: 40,767
females age 16-49: 38,899 (2008 est.)

Military expenditures - percent of GDP: 0.4% (2006)

Transnational Issues

Costa Rica

Disputes - international: the ICJ has given Costa Rica until January 2008 to reply and Nicaragua until July 2008 to rejoin before rendering its decision on the navigation, security, and commercial rights of Costa Rican vessels on the Río San Juan over which Nicaragua retains sovereignty

Refugees and internally displaced persons: *refugees (country of origin)*: 9,699-11,500 (Colombia) (2007)

Trafficking in *current situation:* Costa Rica is a source, transit, and destination country for persons: men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor; women and girls from neighboring states, Russia, Uzbekistan, and the Philippines are trafficked into the country for sexual exploitation; Costa Rica also serves as a transit point for victims trafficked to North America and Europe; the government identifies child sex tourism as a serious problem; men, women, and children are also trafficked within the country for forced labor in fishing and construction, and as domestic servants

tier rating: Tier 2 Watch List - Costa Rica is on the Tier 2 Watch List for its failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat human trafficking, particularly in terms of its failure to improve its inadequate assistance to victims; while Costa Rican officials recognize human trafficking as a serious problem, the lack of a stronger response by the government is of concern (2008)

Illicit drugs: transshipment country for cocaine and heroin from South America; illicit production of cannabis in remote areas; domestic cocaine consumption, particularly crack cocaine, is rising; significant consumption of amphetamines

Information current as of 7 August, 2008

SOURCES: The CIA World Factbook

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