



1

Remember when you were young and the ultimate thrill was finding a secret hideout where you could retreat from the world? That's exactly how I felt my first night in Costa Rica, swaying in my hammock and listening to the howler monkeys raiding the mango trees below my cabana. Actually, childhood memories of hiding out in my tree house came back to me over and over again throughout my travels in Costa Rica. There's nothing like a jungle-shrouded eco-resort to help you recapture the tranquility you first experienced lying on your back and stargazing through the leaves when you were 9 years old.

#### Beach Hideaway

Start your Costa Rica exploration at **Hotel Punta Islita**, a small beach resort on the Nicoya Peninsula that proves that luxury and sustainability don't have to be mutually exclusive. Tucked into the steep green hills of Costa Rica's **Guanacaste province**, **Hotel Punta Islita** overlooks a rock-shrouded cove that feels like such a well-guarded secret you expect to see a black-masted pirate ship slip around the rocks at any moment.

# Great Escapes // Costa Rica and Other Nature-Infused Retreats

For restoration of body and soul—and a chance to experience jungles alive with wildlife and beaches devoid of people—Costa Rica offers an abundance of delights. By Melanie Haiken



2



Finca Rosa Blanca has a coffee farm you can tour.



Get covered in mud without breaking a sweat at Punta Islita's Casa Spa.



3



4



5

- 1 La Fortuna Falls in Costa Rica
- 2 An ocean-view suite at Punta Islita
- 3 The tranquility of the rain forest at El Silencio
- 4 Kayak expeditions double as wildlife safaris
- 5 A suite at Finca Rosa Blanca



6

**Finca Rosa Blanca**



7



8



9



- 6 Hiking the trail at Cloud Forest Reserve
- 7 The beach at Lapa Rios
- 8 Lapa Rios Lodge
- 9 Picking coffee beans at Finca Rosa Blanca
- 10 A stone-covered walkway at Finca Rosa Blanca

Sting and Trudy Styler have their own bit of paradise in Costa Rica.

**Punta Islita**



The Nicoya Peninsula region of Costa Rica is one of the places Brazilian beauty Giselle Bündchen calls home. This past April, she and hubby Tom Brady tied the knot—for the second time—here.

rainforest reserve farther south on the **Osa Peninsula**. You can't help but feel worlds away when a troupe of white-faced capuchin monkeys appears on the deck at breakfast, while toucans and scarlet macaws swoop tree to tree in the canopy. (A bird-watching balcony reached by a spiral stairway offers the perfect perch for viewing.)

It's no accident that the best view of the sea below is from the deck of the yoga hut, where early morning classes get you ready for days spent swimming, hiking or adventuring into nearby Corcovado National Park.

Guided jungle walks have you stalking coati, spying on the antics of elastic spider monkeys and hoping for a glimpse of a mysterious tapir. Here's what I learned about spirituality at Lapa Rios: It's impossible to feel even an iota of angst when, in the midst of a jungle hike at night, your flashlight suddenly illuminates a cluster of



10

red-eyed tree frogs, their smooth skin an unearthly neon green.

**Coffee Plantation**

The same sense of wonder pervades the vine-hung gardens of **Finca Rosa Blanca**, a boutique hotel and coffee farm on the flanks of the **Poás Volcano**, where cars are left outside the gates to maintain an atmosphere of perfect peace. Surrounded by hills striped with lush rows of coffee bushes, Finca Rosa Blanca feels like a hidden oasis just 15 minutes from Costa Rica's bustling capital, San José, and its main airport. Guests are encouraged to take a tour of the organic coffee farm, and an afternoon of coffee tasting becomes a meditation on the intricacies of taste and smell and an education in cultivation, picking, roasting and grinding. It's just one of the ways a trip to Costa Rica will relax your body and feed your mind.

The routine at Punta Islita offers generous helpings of both adventure and relaxation: A 9-hole golf course, horseback riding on the beach and a surf school are available to keep you active. The cove is fed by a sleepy river surrounded by mangroves, the perfect setting for a guided group kayak expedition that doubles as a wildlife safari. The hotel's new **Casa Spa** offers world-class treatments in a setting so serene you'll linger by the fountain for an extra glass—or two, or three—of the delicious herb-infused tea. If a secluded forest adventure is more your style, try **El Silencio Lodge & Spa**, owned by the same group as Puna Islita. River rafting, mountain biking and canopy zip-lining are just a few of the activities offered.

**Rainforest Experience**

Total immersion in nature offers a different route of escape at **Lapa Rios**, an eco-lodge situated in the middle of a 1,000-acre private



**Getting There**

Going to Costa Rica? Delta flies to Liberia in the Guanacaste province (Punta Islita) and San José in central Costa Rica (Finca Rosa Blanca), where you can connect to a local flight to Puerto Jiménez (Lapa Rios). [hotelpuntaislita.com](http://hotelpuntaislita.com), [laparios.com](http://laparios.com), [fincarosablanca.com](http://fincarosablanca.com)

**Where to eat:**

**Punta Islita:** Meals in the main restaurant, called **1492**, are delightful thanks to the ultrafresh seafood, elegant global-fusion presentation and phenomenal views.

**Lapa Rios:** The gardens and greenhouse behind the kitchen at Lapa Rios have an important purpose: growing the ingredients that are the centerpiece of the restaurant's organic menu. The fish and meat are so fresh that you order your dinner at breakfast so supplies can be brought in.

**El Tigre Vestido:** Meals in Finca Rosa Blanca's restaurant feature exotic produce grown in the inn's organic orchards and gardens.

