

## TRAVEL TIPS: A VISIT TO OSA MOUNTAIN VILLAGE



### Arrival in Costa Rica

This document will help you plan your trip to Osa Mountain Village and has been developed from the experience of many individuals who have come here in the past. The goal is to make it easy and relaxing for you by knowing what to expect and how to plan your trip. Planning ahead will help but you also do not have to have every detail accounted for as flexibility in your itinerary will also lend itself to an enjoyable trip.

**Contact Information:** To call these numbers from the states you must dial 011-506 and the number.

|                 |           |                          |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Jim Gale        | 8832-4898 | Sales                    |
| Ricardo         | 8718-3878 | Sales - On-site          |
| Eric J & Bill H | 8760-2168 | Guest Services           |
| Skip            | 8705-7168 | Sales - San José liaison |

Toll free from the USA and Canada for Guest Services: 888-68Osa Mt (888-686-7268)

Be sure to coordinate your visit with Jim Gale or one of the Osa Mountain Village sales staff in advance. Osa Mountain Village is located in the South Pacific zone near the west coast. From San Jose you have the option to take a bus from the MUSOC bus terminal (\$5) in San José for a 3 hour ride to the city of San Isidro de El General. There you can meet up with Jim, where he can drive you from San Isidro to Osa Mountain Village for the tour. Or you can rent your own car, and drive down to Osa Mountain Village yourself – meeting at the Osa Mountain Village & Canopy Tour office. See directions below for **Reaching Osa Mountain Village from San José**. You can also fly to the nearby town of Palmar Sur and we can arrange to pick you up or you can make a reservation with Alamo or Dollar rental car who will meet you at the airport. Palmar Sur is just 20 minutes from Osa Mountain Village. Be aware that the commuter aircraft that services this town has a weight limit for bags. You can search their websites for more information and pricing – Nature Air, or Sansa Airlines.

### Navigating the Airport

Most visitors will arrive at the Juan Santamaría International Airport in the capital city of San José located in the Central Valley of the country. Liberia is the other international airport but it is about 6 hours from Osa Mountain Village so we have not included information about it in this document.

After you exit the plane follow the signs to the Customs and Immigration/baggage claim area. There is really only one way out so you should not have any problems finding this. The first checkpoint you come to is the Immigration counter where they will want to see your passport and the forms the airline gave you on the plane. Be sure you have these filled out before you get in line. At the counter they may ask some innocent questions and check your passport on the computer but it is normally a friendly formality. After that you get a stamped visa in your passport which gives you a 90 day stay in Costa Rica. Note: If you are traveling with children there are some special exit procedures that you must follow when you leave Costa Rica, especially if both parents are not traveling together. Check with the nearest Costa Rican Embassy before you go for more information.

After clearing Immigration you will go to the baggage claim area. Grab a free cart if you have several bags. Once you have your bags you can take care of getting money, phone cards or SIM chips for your 3G phone (see Cell Phones below). There is also a duty free store just to the right as you walk in baggage claim. Here you can purchase many items at significant savings so it's worth a look especially if you plan to buy any alcoholic beverages during your trip. Once you're ready to leave the baggage claim area you will have to clear customs. If you thought Immigration was a breeze, Customs is even more informal. Unless you have declared something unusual on your customs form (not recommended) you simply hand your slip to the agent (who normally doesn't even read it) and place your luggage on the x-ray scanner belt. Go to the other side retrieve your luggage and you are on your way. Every once in a while a person will be asked to open a suit case for inspection. As long as you are not carrying any prohibited items like guns and such, you should have no problems. After customs you are on your way out of the airport. Before you exit the airport know your plan as the area outside the door can be very chaotic, with all sorts of folks offering you a taxi or other service. Keep your eye on your bags and personal belongings and never leave them unattended once you leave the airport! The taxi company and rental-car agencies accept U.S. dollars. Taxis are inexpensive. Cab fares can be pre-purchased inside the airport at a counter near the exit. Many car rental agencies and some hotels offer free shuttles, so check with them before you arrive and make plans accordingly. NOTE: make sure the shuttle is operating during the time you arrive as some shut down at 6:00pm even though the hotel or car rental is still open!

## **Money**

You have several options for exchanging or obtaining money when you arrive at the airport. We do not recommend changing money before you leave home as you get a very low exchange rate. Travelers checks are also not recommended as most merchants and hotels do not accept them and cashing them at a bank can be a long process... We recommend you carry a reasonable amount of cash (\$200-\$400) and refill at the ATMs as you go. ATMs are located throughout Costa Rica and generally do not charge any fees. Your bank will probably charge you a fee so be sure you understand what the charges are before you leave. Most ATMs in Costa Rica have an English text option so you can read the screen. In general they operate just like the ones in the states. Many of them even offer to you USD\$ or Colones¢. Dollars are accepted almost everywhere but you never know what exchange rate you will get so we recommend using Colone. Most ATMs will limit the withdrawal amount at ¢200,000, around \$400. ATMs only dispense in increments of ¢10,000 (\$20) so be sure you enter an amount that is divisible by this

figure. There are two ATMs in the baggage claim area, so you have your choice of using the STAR, PLUS or Cirrus ATM networks. There is also a Global Exchange money exchange booth where you can exchange cash. It is open whenever there are arriving flights however the exchange rate is usually 10% below the best rate. There is also a Banco de San José inside the main terminal, on the second floor across from the airline check-in counters but it may not be open at all hours. There are also a couple more ATMs in that area.

### Conversion - USD\$ to Colones¢

To understand what things cost in Costa Rica you will have to make a general conversion of Colones into US Dollars. An easy way to estimate the cost of things is to use the rate of ¢500 colones for every \$1 USD. So for example if you have something that costs ¢1,500 colones you can quickly see that it is equal to \$3 - (1500/500=3). For more complex prices that don't divide by 500 simply take the colones amount and multiply it by 2, drop the last digit, then add the decimal point in at the last two digits. For example: if something costs ¢22,450,  $22450 * 2 = 44,900$ , dropping the last digit from 44,900, you get 4490. Treat the last two numbers as cents and place the decimal point accordingly. Therefore you end up with 4490 = \$44.90. This may seem complex but once you do it a few times it becomes very easy to look at a price and know what it translates to in USD

Colones come in the following denominations in paper bills and coins:  
(using the general rule of 500 ¢colones = 1 USD\$ you can see the relative value of each)

| Bills        |         | Coins        |        |
|--------------|---------|--------------|--------|
| Denomination | \$      | Denomination | \$     |
| ¢20,000      | \$40.00 | ¢500         | \$1.00 |
| ¢10,000      | 20.00   | ¢100         | 0.50   |
| ¢5,000       | \$10.00 | ¢50          | \$0.25 |
| ¢2,000       | \$4.00  | ¢25          | \$0.12 |
| ¢1,000       | \$2.00  | ¢10          | \$0.05 |

### Cell Phones

Many rental car agencies offer local cell phone rentals to use during your visit. They can be expensive and we do not recommend this because many of these phones are the older GSM phones instead of the new 3G protocol. Only the 3G phones will work in the area of Osa Mountain Village Resort and most of the Pacific coast south of Jacó.

### Using your own 3G phone

If you own a 3G phone with an American carrier today there is an easy and inexpensive solution that will allow you to use your phone while in Costa Rica. Before you leave the country contact your cell carrier and request the 'Unlock code' for your phone model. By law they now have to provide this information to you as it allows you to take your phone and use it on any carrier you desire (the one exception is the Apple Iphone). Once the phone has been unlocked you can purchase a prepaid SIM chip here in Costa Rica. These are available at the airport in San Jose (except late at night). The provider here is called ICE (pronounced E'say). The ICE counter is located in the baggage claim area on the right side as you walk in after clearing customs. A \$20 chip should last you 2-3 weeks depending on how many long distance calls you make. If it should run out before your visit is up simply go to any bank or major super market and pay for additional minutes. The chip is good for about 2 months so if you are returning you can continue to use it.

### **Pay Phones**

Public phones do not accept foreign coins. The best thing to have is a phone card. There are two types: a 'chip or token', or a scratch off phone card in denominations of 500 to 3000 colones. We recommend you to buy one of these telephone cards when you arrive if you're not going to carry a cell phone. You can get them at the ICE counter in the baggage claim area or most grocery stores, and pharmacies.

### **Computers and the Internet**

Although we recognize that many folks need to stay connected to family and friends through the internet we hope you can leave work at home and enjoy your trip! But for whatever reason you can bring a laptop or hand held device and find many places to access the Internet. The majority of these are also free! Most hotels will offer this as well as restaurants and even some town squares. Unfortunately access and speed can sometimes be less than satisfying. Do not plan to be downloading large videos or files as this could take a long time or not work at all. Some U.S. web sites also restrict access to international users based on your IP address. Using your laptop to make (Skype) calls home is a good way to save money but here again, it all depends on the connection at the moment. We have found that early morning or during the work day you have a better chance of a good connection because there are less local users on the Internet. Osa Mountain Village does have wireless internet access but it is only available in certain areas. The villas do not have wireless access at this time. We hope to have this changed in the near future but for now you will have to go to the office or down to the Canopy Tour office on the coastal highway (Costanera Sur).

### **San José Hotels**

Comfortable hotels can be found near the airport and in the Barrio Amón - the historic neighborhood near downtown. Some inexpensive hotels we recommend are Country Inn Suites in San Antonio de Belén 10 minutes from the airport or the Hotel Dunn Inn in Barrio Amón (walking distance to Costa Rica's national museums and cultural attractions), and also Hotel Santo Tomas and the Hotel Kekoldi in

downtown San José. You can make reservations in advance via the internet. The rates for these hotels will be \$60-120 per night in cash and vary depending on the time of year. Using credit cards may add another 10-15% so we recommend you use cash and save your money! ATMs are located throughout Costa Rica and they generally do not charge any fees to the user but your bank will so be sure you understand what the charges are before you leave. Also remember to have a copy of your passport and the Costa Rica entrance stamp made at your first hotel. Place this in your wallet or purse and keep your passport tucked safely away.



## Car Rental

Many visitors choose to rent a car in San José. From there it is about a four hour drive to Osa Mountain Village in the South Pacific zone. If your flight arrives in the evening you may want to spend the night in San José and rent your car the next day. There are many options for car rentals in San José but whichever you choose, we recommend that you rent a vehicle with 4-wheel drive if you plan to climb the road to Osa Mountain Village. Rental car agencies are located both near the airport and in downtown. Some of the agencies will offer to pick you up from hotels if they are near the airport. Car rentals are expensive! The CR government requires a mandatory insurance for all rentals. All the agencies will try to sell you even more coverage which can drive your cost up to \$80/day or more. So be sure you understand what you need before you get to the counter after a long flight. We have established some very good rates with Dollar/Alamo rental cars. To obtain these rates you must contact a specific agent at Alamo/Dollar and ask for the Osa Mountain Village rate plan.

Ericka Barquero  
Alamo Rent a Car  
ebarquero@grupoanc.com  
Tel: 2242-7734 Cell: 8875-6585

## Climate

Costa Rica is a tropical country situated between 8 and 11 degrees above the equator. It has only two seasons: dry and green! The dry season (called “verano” meaning summer) with very little rain is generally between late December and April and the green or wet season (called “invierno” or winter) lasts the rest of the year - May through November, but still offers an average of about 5-7 hours of daily sunshine. Temperatures range from 75°F at night to 95°F during the day with less humidity at Osa Mountain’s 2000 foot elevation. Light clothing is recommended for this warm climate although you should bring along some long pants and hiking shoes for when you visit the rainforest. Be sure to pack sun screen lotion for the daytime exposure. Some insect repellent may occasionally be needed in the early evening.

## Reaching Osa Mountain Village from San José

The drive to the South Pacific Zone can be traveled by one of two ways. One route is down the new toll road Autopista del Sol (Route 27) from San José across the mountains southwest to the Pacific Coast near Jacó (2 hours) and then south on the newly paved Costanera Sur Highway (flat and straight) south past the village of Ojochal. The Osa Mountain Village & Canopy Tour office is just past the new Osa hospital facility near Ciudad Cortés both on the right hand side of the Costanera Sur. The older route takes you east through the city of Cartago and then taking Route 2 traveling up to an elevation over 10,000 feet into the Talamanca Mountain Range (through the cloud forests of El Quetzal National Park) and then down to the small city of San Isidro El General - also commonly referred to as Pérez Zeledón. Then taking the road (Route 243) southwest through Barú to the beach town of Dominical and then south along the Costanera Highway (Route 34) following the same directions as the first route above to the Osa Mountain Village & Canopy Tour Office.

Here are some directions with landmarks for the drive from San José through San Isidro to Osa Mountain: Leaving the airport follow the highway toward San José and proceed approximately 12 km to the Circunvalacion, the bypass hwy CR 39, the entrance is across from Denny's Restaurant past Hospital Mexico. Follow the rotundas always staying on CR39 until the 215 to Zapote exit. There is a very large statue in the middle of the rotunda and the Zapote road is the first right. At this moment the sign has fallen down and thus is not marked. Follow this road past the Mall del Este until it merges with the highway that picks up again on the far side of Zapote. Choose the middle lane toward Cartago. The InterAmerican Highway (CR2) goes past Cartago and then on up across Cerro de la Muerte (elev 11,000 feet) towards San Isidro de El General (kilometer marker =129). A great rest stop for refreshments on the way is at Ojo de Agua (Km # 76). There is also a great place to view quetzals near there as well. It is marked with some fairly crude signs, and will be on your left as you head south to San Isidro. Once in San Isidro, head west from San Isidro and follow the signs for Dominical (CR27). This is a right turn at the McDonald's onto Calle Central. Pass the central park, go through town and continue 18 Kms. The road winds back up into the mountains. A few kilometers after you reach the summit and then begin your initial descent you will reach the Los Chorros Mirador and Restaurant. This is a great place to check out the view of the valley into which you will be heading .) When you arrive at the Costanera Hwy CR 34 at a T intersection, turn left heading south towards Ojochal and Ciudad Cortés.

## Nearby Small Towns/Villages

**Uvita** – a village consisting of a bank, restaurants, and supermarket and close to the many beach destinations of Ballena Marine National Park along the Costanera Highway, south of Dominical.

**Ojochal** – (pronounced oh-HO-chall) largest community in the area – 30 kilometers south of Dominical along the Costanera Highway and 20 kilometers north of Palmar Norte. It traditionally has been a vacation destination for French Canadians and European tourists with some of the best non-tico (Costa Rican) restaurants nearby.

**Ciudad Cortés** – also known as Puerto Cortés is about 15 minutes south from Ojochal and located off of the Costanera Highway towards the beach. The municipal office of the canton of Osa is here as well as the new 80,000 square foot modern hospital. This is the closest town to Osa Mountain Village only 20 minutes away.

**Palmar Norte and Palmar Sur** – 25 minutes south of Ojochal on the Costanera, just below Cortés. Located along the Gran Terraba River this is the transportation hub (small airport) of the South Pacific Zone. Located here is the closest gas station to Osa Mountain Village.

## Osa Mountain Village & Canopy Tour Office

The main office for the Osa Canopy Tour is located on the Costanera Highway at km marker 196. To get there from Uvita, travel 25 minutes south. From Palmar Sur, travel north just past Ciudad Cortés . Once you are at the Osa Tour office, you can make arrangements to board a vehicle which will take you to the site of the Osa Mountain Village. This is a private reserve which consists of 323 hectares (about 800 acres) of primary and secondary rainforests. Once you reach the beginning of the tour, you will be about 600 meters above the Terraba River where it flows into the Pacific Ocean.



## Road to Osa Mountain Village

If you choose to drive your own vehicle up to Osa Mountain Village, be sure that it has four-wheel drive capability. The road up the mountain is a dirt road to the right just 100 meters north from the Osa Canopy Tour office from the Costanera Highway. Follow the Canopy tour signs (turning left, across the creek, and then right) for about 4 kilometers driving straight up to the top of the mountain along the well-graded dirt road. The drive to Osa Mountain Village will take you about 20 minutes. The views of the Pacific Ocean from atop the mountain are stunning and the proximity to the very edge of the tropical rainforest is amazing.

## Accommodation options during your visit

**Osa Mountain Village Resort** -We have several of our new Villas available for visitors. You can choose between a 1, 2 or 3 bedroom unit. These are completely furnished with full kitchens and a stocked bar. You can relax after a day of adventure tours offered at the resort or whip up your own gourmet dinner! To reserve a Villa for your stay contact Eric or Bill at [guestservicesOMV@gmail.com](mailto:guestservicesOMV@gmail.com). They can also be reached on their cell phone at (506) 8760-2168. If calling from the states dial 011 first.

If accommodations are not available at Osa Mountain, then we recommend you stay at one of the following:

**Crystal Ballena Hotel & Spa** – A beautiful resort located just 20 minutes north from OMV on the coastal Hwy. You can check the web site here [www.cristal-ballena.com](http://www.cristal-ballena.com). Rates run around \$70-\$90 in low season and \$120-\$160 in high season. If you reserve a room be sure to mention you are guests of Osa Mountain Village for the best rates and attention.

**Hotel Las Palmas, Ciudad Cortés** (closest motel to Osa Mountain) Kenneth at Tel 506/2788—7543 or email [hotellaspalmascr@gmail.com](mailto:hotellaspalmascr@gmail.com) Be sure to tell Kenneth that you are a Osa Mountain Village visitor to get the best rate which should be about \$30/day.

**Hotel El Mono Feliz, Ojochal** bed & breakfast - Otto from the Netherlands at Tel 506/2786—5146 or on the internet. Rates are \$60-125/day.

**Playa Luna Apart Hotel**, south of Uvita – apartment/suites with equipped kitchen & bedrooms, etc (road sign to Parque Nacional Marino Ballena, Sector Colonia entrance) Tel 506/2743-8443 Ask for Alejo. Rates are around \$60/day for double occupancy.

## Nearby restaurants

**La Ponderosa** (along Ojo de Agua – the road to the Osa Hospital in Ciudad Cortés) – great tica cooks & drinks, free wi-fi, Eric at Tel 506/2788-8969.

**Los Manglares** (5 kilometers south of Ojochal on the oceanside) traditional tico fare with an ocean view.

**Citrus** (the village of Ojochal) “Mediterranean Fusion” Tel 506/2786-5175

**Exotica** (the village of Ojochal) a hole-in-the-wall with world-class French cuisine Tel 506/786-5050

**Restaurant Marino Ballena** (the village of Uvita – on the Costanera across from Banco Costa Rica), free wi-fi Tel 506/2743-8104

## Recommended Side Trips

**Sierpe** – 15 kilometers south of Palmar Norte passing through rice fields and banana and palm oil plantations. The passageway to the wilderness of the Osa Peninsula with boat tours to Isla Del Cano Corcovado National Park, and Drake Bay. We recommend you take the mangrove tour provided by La Perla Del Sur Adventures inside Restaurante Las Vegas just off of Sierpe’s town square. The boat ride gets you very close to the herons, scarlet macaws, crocodiles, iguanas, and howler, squirrel, and white-faced monkeys! The fee is \$45 for about 3 hours with English speaking guides. Tel: 506/2788-1082

**Corcovado National Park** – this Osa Peninsula park has the largest stronghold of Pacific coast primary rainforest and the largest in size of Costa Rica’s 13 national parks with amazing wildlife. There are four legal ways to enter the park. The most popular way is to take a boat down the Rio Sierpe to Drake’s Bay. La Perla Del Sur Adventures in Sierpe can help you with this. This is not a day trip and you should plan to stay at least one night to see all the park has to offer.

**Ballena Marine National Park** – there are four entrances to this park from beach access roads near Playa Uvita – Sectors Colonia, Arco, Ballena, and Pinuela. Ballena means whale in Spanish and is the southern-most migration point for the 45-foot long endangered humpback whale. The coast here is full of exotic birds and wildlife. Also nearby are Playa Hermosa, Playa Ventana, and Playa Tortuga that do not require you to pay a park admission. The park is 30 minutes from Osa Mountain Village.

**Manuel Antonio National Park** – considered the crown jewel of Costa Rica’s national parks with its tree covered shoreline, white-sand beaches, aqua blue water and a network of canopy-covered hiking trails teeming with sloths, monkeys, lizards and iguanas. The walking trail along the land bridge to Cathedral Point with its views of forested cliffs and the offshore islands or mogotes is dream-like. Yes, lots of tourists here, but a must see! There are many good hotels and restaurants in nearby Manuel Antonio and Quepos. This area is just over an hour north of Osa Mountain Village. You can take hiking trails to see the jungle or just walk into the beach areas and relax. Entrance fees are about \$10/pp so plan to make a day of it. There is no free parking at the park entrance. Private parking will be around \$6 or you can take a taxi or the bus from your hotel.

## Recommended Reading

- *Costa Rica Now* by Phil Baker (A Travel Guide to Living & Owning in Paradise)
- *Costa Rica for Dummies* by Eliot Greenspan
- *Costa Rica National Parks & Preserves* by Joseph Franke
- *The Ticos: Culture and Social Change in Costa Rica* by Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz