



Costa Rica

Costa Rica

Capital

San Jose

National Symbols

The National Flag



The current flag was approved in September 1848 when Costa Rica achieved the status of a Republic. The flag consists of five horizontal stripes: The first and the fifth are blue, the second and the fourth are white, and in the middle there is a red stripe which is double the height of the white stripe. The width of each of the other four stripes.

The blue color represents the sky, the white liberty, purity and freedom, and the red one the blood of their ancestors that fought for freedom.

The flag day is on November the twelfth (because it was shown to Costa Rican people in Central Park the 12/11/1848.)

The Coat of Arms

It was constituted in 1848. The coat of arms consists of three volcanoes and a wide valley between two oceans, and in each of the

oceans, a merchant ship. On the horizon, there is a rising sun between the blue sky and the blue ocean. Seven stars form an arch which represent the seven provinces of the republic. The crown is formed by a blue ribbon with the inscription "América Central". Two wreaths of myrtle leaves joined by a ribbon bearing the inscription "República de Costa Rica".



The National Flower

The Guaria Morada (*Cattleya skinneri*) is the national flower of Costa Rica. This is a species native of the American continent and grows nationwide.

The National Tree

The guanacaste tree (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*) is the national tree.

Costa Rica

The National Emblem



In 1988 the Costa Rican ox-cart ("La Carreta Costarricense") was established as the national symbol of work. Drawn by a team of oxen, the ox-cart was used during the colonial period for the transportation of sugar cane, tobacco, and coffee. Thus, it became a very important factor in the development of agricultural activity in Costa Rica. Nowadays, the ox-cart is one of the most representative handcrafted objects in Costa Rican culture.

History

Independence:
September 15th, 1821 (from Spain)

The first European explorer to discover Costa Rica was the Great Navigator himself, Christopher Columbus. The day was September 18th, 1502, during Columbus' fourth and final voyage to the New World. As he was setting anchor off shore, a crowd of local Carib Indians paddled out in canoes and greeted his crew warmly. Later, the golden bands that the region's inhabitants wore in their noses and ears would inspire the Spaniard Gil Gonzalez Davila to name the country Costa Rica, or Rich Coast. By the time Columbus arrived, there were four major indigenous tribes living in Costa

Rica. The east coast was the realm of the Caribs, while the Borucas, Chibchas, and Diquis lived in the southwest. None of these tribes lasted long after the dawn of Spanish colonialism. Some fled, while many others perished from the deadly smallpox brought by the Spaniards. Having decimated the indigenous labor force, the Spanish followed a common policy and brought in African slaves to work the land. Seventy thousand of their descendants live in Costa Rica today, and the country is known for its good relations among races. Regrettably, only 1 percent of Costa Rica's 3 million people are of indigenous heritage. An overwhelming 98 percent of the country is white, and those of Spanish descent call themselves "Ticos".

Government

Official Name: Republic of Costa Rica

System of Government: Democratic Republic

First Chief of State: Juan Mora Fernandez (1825-1833)

Executive Branch: The cabinet is chosen by the President. The President and two Vice Presidents are elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a four-year term.

Legislative Branch: Unicameral Legislative Assembly (57 seats). Members are elected by direct, popular vote to serve four-year terms.

Judicial Branch: The 22 Justices of the Supreme Court are elected for eight-year terms by the Legislative Assembly.

Costa Rica

| Army: Abolished in 1949.

Main Political Parties

Costa Rica used to have a two-party system, which meant that there were two dominant political parties with extreme difficulty for anybody to achieve electoral success under the banner of any other party. After the 2002 elections and the strong emerging of third parties, the two-party system is considered to be in its final and is likely to be replaced by a multi-party system. There are several important political parties now and the 2006 elections made it clear.

Constitution

Costa Rica is governed by the Constitution of 1949. The Constitution established the separation of powers between the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches. In 1989, the Constitution was amended to create a Constitutional branch within the Supreme Court of Costa Rica. This fourth chamber has specific jurisdiction over matters that involve the Constitution and violation of constitutional rights.

Provinces



There are seven provinces: Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Limon, Puntarenas, San Jose. The main ones are San Jose, Alajuela, and Heredia.

Social Recognition

Historic Figures

Juan Santamaria

Juan Santamaria, (August 1831 - April 1856) is officially recognized as the national hero of the Republic of Costa Rica. A national holiday in Costa Rica, Juan Santamaria Day, is held every April 11th to commemorate his death.

Manuel Gonzalez Zeledon

Manuel Gonzalez Zeledon wrote "La Patria, La Propia". The Magon National Prize for Culture was created in 1962 as a homage to the writer.

Jose Maria Hipolito Figueres Ferrer

Jose Maria Hipolito Figueres Ferrer (September 1906– June 1990) served as President of Costa Rica on three occasions: 1948–1949, 1953–1958, and 1970–1974. During his first term in office, he abolished the country's army, nationalized its banking sector, and granted women the right to vote.

Social Figures

Franklin Ramon Chang-Diaz

Franklin Ramon Chang-Diaz (born April 5th, 1950) is a Costa Rican-American physicist and former NASA astronaut. He is a veteran of seven space shuttle missions,

Costa Rica

making him the record holder for most spaceflights by an astronaut (a record he shares with Jerry L. Ross). He is one of the first American citizens of Latin American descent to go into space.

Paulo Cesar Wanchope Watson

Paulo Cesar Wanchope Watson (born July 31st, 1976 in Heredia, also known as "Chope" or as "La Cobra"), is a former Costa Rican soccer player. Wanchope is the second most prolific goal-scorer in the history of the national football team, behind Rolando Fonseca, with 45 goals in 75 international matches. He is the main reference for Costa Rica's soccer and is considered by a large group of fans as one of the best players the region has ever had, and the most important and recognized player in the history of the country.



Oscar Arias Sanchez

Oscar Arias Sanchez (born: September 13th, 1940, in Heredia, Costa Rica). He was elected president for two periods. In 1987 he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end the civil wars then raging in several Central American countries.

He is also a recipient of the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism and a trustee of Economists for Peace and Security. In 2003, he was elected to the Board of Directors of the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims.

Tourist Sites

The Caño Negro Wetlands

The Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge and the Rio Frio Refuge are biological humid areas considered to among the richest in biological diversity in Costa Rica. Here you will find a great variety of native and migratory birds, additionally, three different species of monkeys, iguanas, turtles and caimans.

Arenal Volcano



The Arenal Volcano is the only volcano in Costa Rica constantly active since it erupted after 400 years with the big 1968 eruption producing huge ash columns, explosions and glowing red lava almost every day. It is considered one of the ten most active volcanoes in the world. This country has beaches, rainforest and the spectacular Arenal.

Tortuguero National Park

Tortuguero National Park is a National Park within the Tortuguero Conservation Area. The reserve is also included in the Humedal Caribe Noreste, a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Costa Rica

The park is located in the Limon Province of northeastern Costa Rica. It is the third-most visited park in Costa Rica, despite the fact that it can only be reached by airplane or boat.