

Welcome to Costa Rica

Lesson Objective & Summary

Objective: Students will learn about the basic history, geography, and cultural heritage of Costa Rica. Students will use a map to locate Costa Rica and its capital (San Jose), as well as identify some of the unique aspects of this Central American nation.

Summary: Students will identify Costa Rica's location on a world map, and will explain some of the major geographic features of Costa Rica. Students will read the [Bienvenidos! Welcome to Costa Rica!](#) blog and watch the episode, [A Quick History of Costa Rica](#), and spend time previewing some of the other blogs and videos in ProjectExplorer.org's Costa Rica section. Students will share their observations and questions about Costa Rica. Finally, students will learn some phrases in Spanish through the episode [Hableme de Usted](#).

Grade Level:
Upper Elementary

DURATION:
1 - 2 Lessons

SUBJECTS:
English Language Arts,
Social Studies, Geography

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Standards & Benchmarks

From the Common Core Standards for Language Arts in History / Social Studies

- Students will quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. (*Key Ideas and Details, Grade 5*)
- Students will draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently. (*Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Grade 5*)

From the New York State Social Studies Standards, Standard 3: Geography

- Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live - local, national, and global - including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth's surface.

Background Information for Educators

Costa Rica is aptly named "The Rich Coast" in Spanish, although its riches lie not in the gold or silver that colonial Spain sought, but in its biodiversity. Although barely 51,000 square kilometers in size, Costa Rica boasts nearly 5% of the world's biodiversity. Costa Rica's landscape includes beautiful coastlines on both the Pacific and Caribbean bodies of water, volcanoes, mountains, lush rainforest, and wetlands. Since the late 1970s, Costa Rica has set a global example for conservation efforts, using the establishment of National Parks and ecotourism to help preserve its natural beauty.

Although Costa Rica was colonized by Spanish explorers in the early 16th century, little was done to develop it further, as Costa Rica had few indigenous (i.e.: Aztec, Inca, or Mayan) people who were able to serve as laborers in establishing a local colony. Costa Rica was therefore predominantly left to develop on its own, which led to the establishment of a more egalitarian society (a society in which equality among peoples is celebrated). Costa Rica was officially declared independent from Spanish territorial control in 1821, when Spain lost in the Mexican War for Independence.

Costa Rica's peaceful history has only been marked by two bloody uprisings: the 1917-1919 dictatorship of Federico Tinoco Granadas, which was overthrown by the Costa Rican people, and the 44-day Costa Rican Civil war in 1948, when Jose Figueres Ferrer led rebels to overthrow the presiding leadership and establish a more democratic-style government.

Costa Rica's rich volcanic soil makes it a prime location for growing coffee, sugarcane, pineapple, and bananas. Because of tax exemptions given to companies willing to invest in Costa Rica, large pharmaceutical and technological companies have transformed much of Costa Rica's economy since the early 2000s.

Guiding Questions	Key Vocabulary
<p>Where is Costa Rica located?</p> <p>What is the capital of Costa Rica?</p> <p>What languages are spoken in Costa Rica?</p> <p>What are some of Costa Rica's unique geographic features?</p> <p>What are some of the natural resources found in Costa Rica?</p> <p>What type of government does Costa Rica have? How does it differ from your home country?</p>	<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Conservation</p> <p>Tourism</p> <p>Egalitarian</p> <p>Colonization</p> <p>Spanish</p>

Lesson Plan

1. Using a world map, ask students to locate Costa Rica. Ask students to locate Costa Rica's capital city (San Jose). How do they know it is the capital? What usually happens in a capital city?
2. Have students look at some of the geographic features of Costa Rica (coastline; volcanoes). Have students locate and identify some of the countries nearby. Ask students to think about how the geography of Costa Rica might influence how the Costa Rican people live, or what their occupations may have traditionally looked like (i.e.: fishing, farming, hunting, etc.).
3. Distribute the Costa Rica (pages 6 & 7) Worksheet to students. Ask students to complete the information they have already discovered about Costa Rica.
4. Read the [Bienvenido! Welcome to Costa Rica!](#) blog and watch the [A Quick History of Costa Rica](#) episode. Ask students to write what observations they made from the video. Encourage students to consider what other nations and people groups may have influenced the culture of Costa Rica (Spanish, Mexicans).
5. Briefly explain the history of Costa Rica. Ask students to consider what makes Costa Rica different from some of its neighboring countries. Have students make comparisons between Costa Rica and their home country.
6. Show students the episodes [Biodiversity and Conservation](#) and [The Trail of Giants](#) in ProjectExplorer.org's Costa Rica pages. Have students add thoughts and observations to their Costa Rica Worksheet (pages 6 & 7), particularly focusing on the geographical features and steps that Costa Rica has made to preserve its vibrant biodiversity.
7. In small groups, ask students to preview some of the other chapters, blogs, and videos on ProjectExplorer.org's Costa Rica pages. Have students complete the ProjectExplorer.org Costa Rica Worksheet with their learning and questions about Costa Rica. Invite students to share their observations and questions on a class chart.
8. Watch [Hableme de Usted](#) to learn a few simple phrases in Spanish. Have students practice speaking phrases along with the video.
9. Have students reflect on what they have learned about Costa Rica so far. Write down additional questions students may have and encourage them to think about how Costa Rica compares with their home country. Have students think about what they would like to see and do if they were to visit Costa Rica.

Assessment / Evidence of Understanding

- Student will identify the location of Costa Rica and its capital city, San Jose, using a world map.
- Student will identify the geographic features of Costa Rica and make inferences about how the Costa Rican people live and what natural resources they have.
- Student will identify some of the major features and facts about Costa Rica.

Assessment Rubric	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Geography Skills	<p>With assistance, student can locate country and capital city on a map.</p> <p>Student may be able to identify some geographic features, but may require guidance to make inferences about people's daily life due to the geography.</p>	<p>Student can locate country and capital city on a map. With assistance, student can identify the longitude/latitude coordinates of the country. Student can identify some of the specific geographic features (volcanos, rain forests, nearby nations) independently. Student can make basic inferences about how people's daily life is shaped by their geography.</p>	<p>Student can locate country and capital city on a map. Student independently identifies the longitude/latitude coordinates of the country, and can identify numerous specific geographic features (rain forests, volcanos, nearby nations) independently. Student makes clear observations and inferences linking the geographical landscape with the way local people live their lives. Student may also be able to share other observations about how bordering nations may influence the local people, culture, and way of life.</p>
Costa Rica Worksheet	<p>With assistance, student is able to complete the Costa Rica Worksheet, completing all required sections.</p> <p>With assistance, student can identify several interesting facts about the country.</p>	<p>Student is able to complete the worksheet independently, using available resources in the classroom & online (i.e.: Atlas, CIA Fact Book, ProjectExplorer.org).</p> <p>Student uses observations and resources to identify interesting facts about country. Student makes connections and asks questions that are grade-level appropriate.</p>	<p>Student completes the worksheet independently, using available resources in the classroom & online (i.e.: Atlas, CIA Fact Book, ProjectExplorer.org), but student may make connections with other countries or with prior knowledge. Student uses observations and resources to identify interesting facts about the country while also making insightful inferences that reflect higher-level connections and thinking. Student makes connections and asks questions that exceed grade-level expectations.</p>

Additional Resources

CIA World Fact Book, Costa Rica

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cr.html>

Lonely Planet: Costa Rica

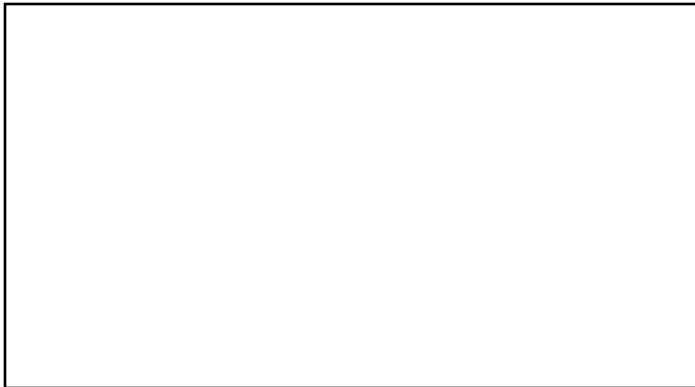
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/CostaRica>

Visit Costa Rica

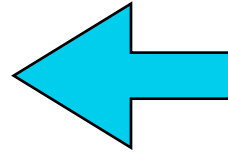
<http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/informacion.asp>

***** Costa Rica Worksheet follows on next page *****

Costa Rica Worksheet



Draw the flag of Costa Rica here



CAPITAL CITY:	
CONTINENT:	
MAP COORDINATES:	
LANGUAGE(S):	
GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES:	
BORDERING COUNTRIES:	
NATURAL RESOURCES:	
TYPE OF GOVERNMENT:	
INTERESTING FACTS:	

What do I think I know about Costa Rica?

What would I like to know about Costa Rica?

What do I think I will learn about Costa Rica from the ProjectExplorer.org team?

What other questions do I have Costa Rica that I may need to research further?

If I visited Costa Rica, I would like to see...