

TRAVEL + CULTURE MAGAZINE

JOYY MEETS WORLD

OCTOBER 2024 / VOL.01

EXPLORE OUR
LAUNCH ISSUE!

GENERATIONS OF
STRENGTH: HONORING
AFRO-COSTA RICAN HISTORY

PURA VIDA
EXPLAINED

The *Costa Rica* Issue





TREE FROG, PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT

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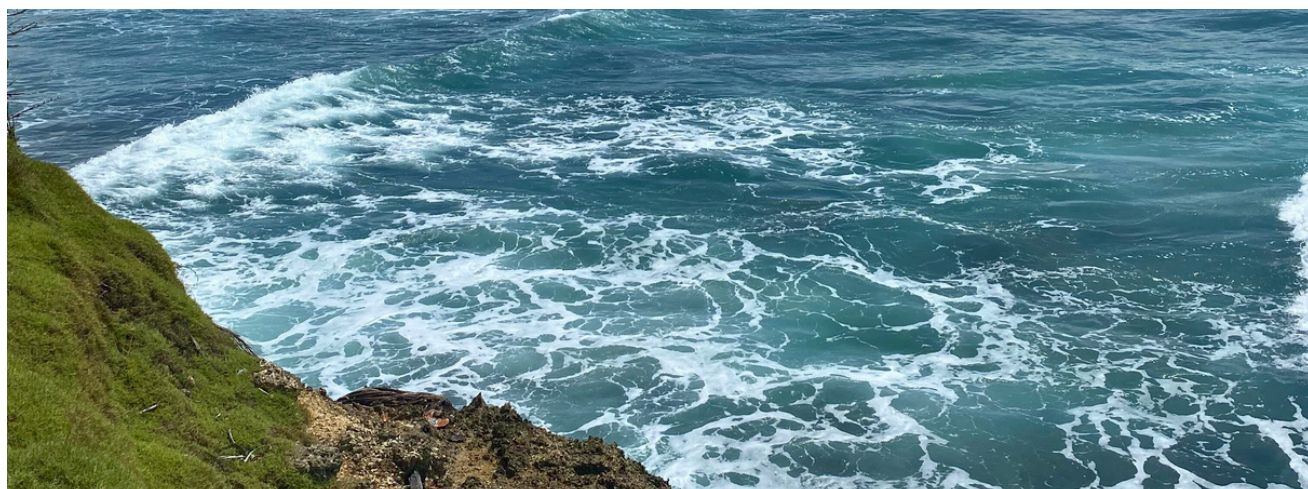
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JOY GRANT: FOUNDER & WRITER

Joy Grant, a Michigan native, holds a degree in Social Science from the University of the Virgin Islands, where she developed a deep understanding of how history, society, and culture intertwine to shape human experiences. Her passion for travel began with a high school senior trip to Italy, which sparked a lifelong curiosity about the world's diverse cultures and historical narratives.



NINA SCOTT: WRITER

Nina is a proud graduate of the University of the Virgin Islands with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology. Nina believes in the power of science communication to bridge gaps in access to information. Originally from Detroit, she is committed to fostering greater environmental awareness and ensuring that science is accessible to everyone.



AMBER STOKES: MANAGING EDITOR

As managing editor of *Joyy Meets World*, Amber Stokes has been able to put the English degree she's earned from Michigan State University to good use. She is a dedicated reader and enjoys helping writers depict their stories in a way that feels real, vivid, and informative.

Editor's Letter



Dear Reader,

I want to start by thanking you for being here. It means a lot to me that in a world where our attention is constantly being pulled in different directions, you've chosen to spend time with *Joy Meets World*. This magazine is a labor of love, and I'm excited to share these stories with you.

I went to school in the Virgin Islands, so the Caribbean will always have a special place in my heart. It's only right that my first magazine issue highlights an important story in Caribbean history. During my time in Costa Rica, I was inspired by its rich culture, the warmth of the people, and its powerful history. I hope that you'll feel inspired as well as you dive into these stories.

This issue is centered around themes of resilience, cultural preservation, and responsible tourism — concepts that resonate deeply with me and the stories we're sharing. Our cover story **Generations of Strength** explores the province of Limón and the legacy of the Jamaican Migrant Workers whose strength and determination helped build this region into the black oasis that it's seen as today. As more expats enter Costa Rica it's

imperative to honor and recognize this history to avoid erasing generations of work and triumphs.

Another one of these stories is **Josefina's Kitchen**, where you'll meet a cooking instructor who invites tourists into her home to learn a recipe and her family's story. It's an impactful reminder of how culture and history can be preserved in the most everyday things, like a meal shared across generations.

Of course, we can't talk about Costa Rica without talking about its incredible biodiversity. In **Land of the Turtles** Nina Scott, a marine biology doctoral student discusses Tortuguero's unique environment and ecotourism efforts. With so much of the World's biodiversity located in such a small country, it's essential to discuss how conservation and tourism overlap.

For me, travel has always been a source of education. Every experience, conversation, and meal has taught me something new about the world and myself. Through this magazine, I hope to pass that education on to you. The way we choose to travel and plan our experiences directly impacts not only our worldviews but also the communities that we interact with while there. As Costa Rica experiences a tourism boom we all must acknowledge our responsibility to ethically reap the benefits of all the work done by the beautiful people there and the generations before them.

As you travel through these articles I hope you find inspiration, education, and maybe even a new outlook on the places you've traveled and the people you've met. There's so much more to come in future issues of *Joy Meets World*, and I can't wait to continue this journey with you.

Until Next time!

Joy Grant

Introduction



NINA SCOTT IN MANZANILLO NATIONAL PARK, PHOTO CREDIT: JOY GRANT

A love letter to Costa Rica

By **Nina Scott**

Costa Rica can be everything you've imagined paradise to be and so much more, from the stunning beaches with amazing sunsets on the Pacific coast to the rare and lush cloud forests with stunning views of wildlife. But, beyond the breathtaking scenery, it's the people who add the warmth and depth that the country is known for. It's one thing to visit a beach it's a whole other thing to sit with an indigenous tribe like the Bribri and make their traditional breakfast of homemade chocolate and bananas. Travel also

presents an opportunity for self-discovery.

I took my first trip to Costa Rica as a student ambassador in the summer of 2011. I didn't know those two weeks before high school started would change me forever. I was 13 and at that time, had never traveled without my family and was afraid of being alone. But, the moment I saw the lush green foliage and felt the warm embrace of the tropical air on my skin, I fell in love, and for the first time, I felt free. We toured the country from coast to coast and when we weren't busy with

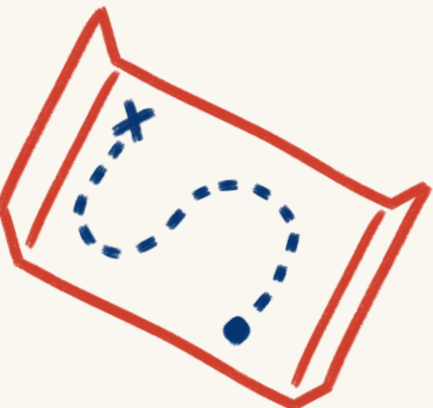
excursions or volunteering we were on the bus, headed to a new city. I went whitewater rafting down roaring rivers, observed sea turtles nesting on remote beaches, rappelled down waterfalls, and kayaked through bioluminescent bays. It had everything I never knew I needed.

Costa Rica allowed me to put my guard down and just be myself. Outside of Detroit, Costa Rica was the first place that reaffirmed that my blackness was special and beautiful. I remember the first time, someone called me “Negrita”. I was playing dominos with elderly men who I didn’t speak the same language as, but I didn’t need to. I felt so at peace until I heard Negrita. Then all I felt was anger until my guide noticed my shift and explained to me that he meant it as a term of endearment. I carried myself differently after that. Prior to my trip, I had declared that I wanted to be a marine biologist in name alone. However, it didn’t feel practical. Society had convinced me to stay out of the sun to avoid getting darker, to wear my hair pressed and curled, and that wearing Chacos wasn’t cool. Through our many outdoor excursions, I embraced not only nature but a lifestyle that would eventually lead me down a path to marine biology.

I planned my most recent trip to Costa Rica when I knew I needed another reset. I followed a nearly identical route, which would create the strangest feelings of resonance with my younger self. I visited new cities and rediscovered past ones, this trip was not just about reliving; it was about rediscovering who I’ve become since then.

I don’t think this experience is or has to be unique to me. Anyone, especially black travelers can visit and connect with themselves and with Tico (local) culture. Furthermore traveling to Caribbean coast, places like Costa Rica allows us to witness how African heritage has shaped cultures beyond the U.S., and that sense of connectedness is deeply healing. It reminds us that no matter where we go, there’s a part of our story interwoven with the land, the people, and their traditions. The similarities in food alone can stir up feelings of home from their corn flour empanadas, reminding me of cornbread to our shared joy of making moonshine. A part of me feels strange for being so grateful for a place that isn’t tied to my own culture but, Costa Rica is more than just a destination - it’s a place that has shaped me. I love Costa Rica like I love Detroit and I think everyone deserves to go somewhere and feel loved right back.

**Pura Vida,
Nina Scott**



Pura Vida

If the well-known Lion King phrase “Hakuna Matata” grew up and earned a master’s degree, it could only dream of becoming what “Pura Vida” is to Costa Ricans.

By Joy Grant

Walking around Costa Rica you see “Pura Vida” everywhere—on T-shirts, in art, even on billboards. But it’s bigger than that; you can feel it in the warm smiles of the people you meet, hear it in the greetings you hear, and taste it in every plate of food you eat. While the phrase originated as the title of a popular 1950s movie in Mexico, Costa Ricans embraced it, popularized it, and made it their unofficial national motto. The exact translation is “pure life” or “simple life”, which seems trivial until you experience it. “Pura Vida means freedom, for me, it’s no one judging you— everybody’s equal,” Jason-Haus Louis told me during an interview

“

Pura Vida means freedom, for me, it’s no one judging you— everybody’s equal

When a culture develops around the mindset that you don’t need much to be happy and that the beauty of nature is a blessing, that ethos transforms society as a whole. “Pura Vida” is a greeting, a lifestyle, and even a prayer that everything is going to work out.

MANZANILLO NATIONAL PARK, PHOTO CREDIT: JOY GRANT

The Perfect Weekend in La Fortuna

Picture yourself soaking in a natural hot spring, resting on black lava rocks beneath a lush green canopy, with cool water misting through the trees. If you'd like to make this dream a reality it's time to plan a trip to La Fortuna!

By Nina Scott

La Fortuna, located in the northern region of the country, is widely known as the adventure capital of Costa Rica. This city tucked into the base of the Arenal Volcano is packed with epic adventures such as ziplining through the jungle canopy at high speeds, white water rafting in rapids ranked from I to V, or rappelling almost 200 feet off the side of a waterfall and so much more! Even if you aren't an outdoorsman, La Fortuna has something for everyone. I've been to Costa Rica three times and while I've explored new cities and not revisited others, La Fortuna has and will remain a constant.



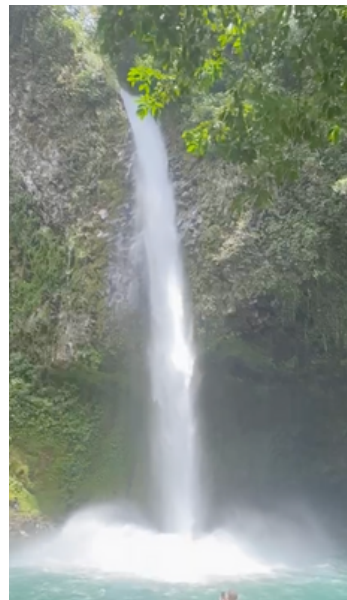
HORSES NEAR ARENAL VOLCANO, PHOTO CREDIT: EDDYTA BARTKIEWICZ

In my experience, the combination of thrill-seeking and meeting like-minded adventurers makes the town feel so much bigger and faster-paced than it is. But when you slow down (or even extend your stay like I did) you come to realize that the town itself is quaint. The locals truly embody the spirit of pura vida—how could they not? Life in the volcanic highlands is picturesque with hot springs under jungle canopy and breathtaking waterfalls fit for swimming. While the city center has developed to accommodate the infrastructural needs of the tourism industry, the surrounding town remains beautifully untouched, adding to its authentic charm.

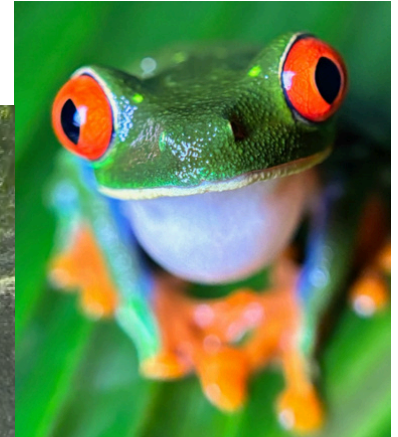
This itinerary is perfect for travelers with just 4-days to spare.

Day 1: La Fortuna Falls

Assuming you arrive mid-day, start your trip with a visit to La Fortuna Waterfall (\$18 per person entry fee), where you can swim in its refreshing waterfalls. Afterward, head into town for dinner at a local spot or enjoy a meal at the on-site restaurant. For a unique evening experience, go on a night tour at Papa's Place to see Costa Rica's famed tree frogs (price varies with options for hotel pickup).



LA FORTUNA WATERFALL
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT



TREE FROGS
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT



WHITE WATER RAFTING
PHOTO CREDIT:
GETTY IMAGES



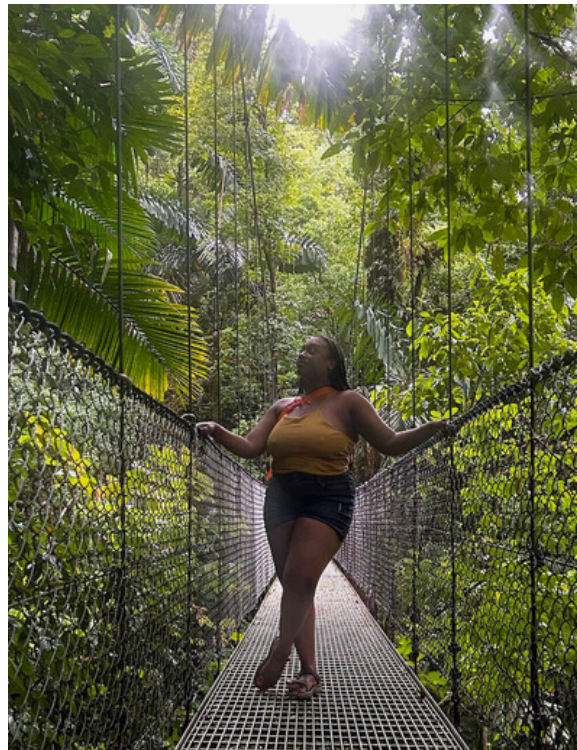
EMPANADA ARREGLADA
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT

Day 2: White Water Rafting & Rappelling

Spend the morning white water rafting and rappelling (tour prices are around \$190 per person). Afterward, cool off at El Salto, a popular local rope swing spot, and try some street food. End the day with a laid-back dinner at a nearby soda like Soda El Turnito. I highly recommend the empanada arreglada.

Day 3: Hanging Bridges & Volcano Exploration

Start your day at [Mistico Hanging Bridges](#) (prices start around \$30). Booking ahead is recommended, and hiring a guide enhances your chances of spotting wildlife. In the afternoon, choose between riding horses or hiking Arenal Volcano. [AllTrails](#) is a great resource for route options. After dinner, hit up [Charlie's](#), a popular nightclub where locals and tourists mix.



NINA SCOTT AT MISTICO
HANGING BRIDGES
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT



HOT SPRINGS IN TABACON THERMAL
RESORT & SPA
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT

Day 4: Hot Springs and Relaxation

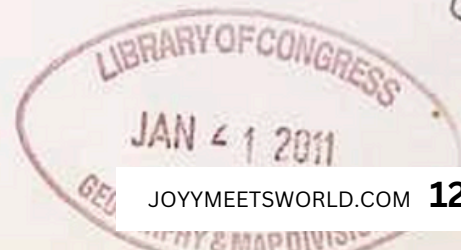
End your trip with a visit to [Tabacon Thermal Resort & Spa](#) (day passes from \$90) or enjoy the free hot springs across the street. Then, it's time to head out and say goodbye to La Fortuna.

Just like that, your weekend in La Fortuna would have come to an end, but the memories of sugar cane moonshine, scenic soaks, and great vibes will linger far longer. La Fortuna is not just a place for thrill-seekers; it's a destination that invites you to slow down and savor the beauty of its surroundings. In any season, it is worth the investment to experience firsthand that pura vida isn't just a saying but a way of life.





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BLACK AND WHITE RESTAURANT, PHOTO CREDIT: JOY GRANT

OXTAILS FOR BREAKFAST

Explore the fusion of Jamaican and Costa Rican flavors at Black and White

By Joy Grant

Photography By Joy Grant

One main road wraps along Puerto Viejo's waterfront, lined with colorful shops and restaurants set against the backdrop of the beach. Among the many options for breakfast, there was one that stood out. Outside the restaurant, Nina and I were greeted by a sign that listed oxtails among the specials, paired with the sight of a child eagerly drinking a thick mango smoothie out of a mason jar. This scene created the perfect snapshot of how we wanted to spend our first morning in town.

Black and white is an open-air restaurant that mixes the modern and traditional Caribbean aesthetic. We ate there twice during our stay and both of my meals had the same key ingredient: oxtails. My first visit allowed me to order gallo pinto, a dish that I had never heard of before, with oxtails. Gallo pinto is a Costa Rican rice and beans dish that is traditionally

served at breakfast alongside eggs, natilla (sour cream), plantain, and a protein. Adding oxtails as a protein option to accompany the gallo pinto sets this restaurant and the province of Limón apart, pointing to the region's Jamaican influences. Being in the Caribbean, I wasn't skeptical of ordering the oxtails, but the first bite still caught me off guard. The meat was tender, perfectly seasoned, and fell off the bone. What I wasn't sold on was the egg and oxtail combo. So when I tasted how the thick oxtail sauce perfectly soaked into the rice and the fried medium eggs I was surprisingly swayed.

While the food at Black and White is great, that's not the only thing that makes it stand out; it's a restaurant with deep roots in Puerto Viejo's evolving culinary scene. After biting into a roll that transported me to eating my

great aunt's famous rolls at Thanksgiving, I immediately knew that I couldn't leave without speaking with the owner. "Cooking is in my blood," Jason Haus-Lewis told me during our conversation. Black and White is one of three restaurants that Jason leads. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, [the rest of the country shut down](#) while beach towns like Puerto Viejo subsequently experienced a tourism boom.



GALLO PINTO WITH OXTAILS

“
Cooking is in my
blood.
”

Seeing this business opportunity, Jason came home from San Jose, the nation's capital, and started with his brother's restaurant, Joe's Caribbean Food. Since then, he has expanded his business to include two more restaurants, Louis's House (a vegan and gluten-free eatery) and Black and White (the most upscale of the three). When I asked how he learned to cook, with a nostalgic smile he said, "I grew up in a house where my father did the cooking, he taught me and my brothers."

Jason took that natural passion and turned it into magic, attending university in San Jose to study culinary arts. With a Jamaican father and a Costa Rican Mother, Jason has crafted



JASON HAUS-LOUIS OUTSIDE OF HIS RESTAURANT LEWIS'S HOUSE

the menu at Black and White to perfectly reflect the cultural fusion that is Puerto Viejo. It features specials like red snapper, banana pancakes, prime rib, and ceviche alongside fresh pressed juices and smoothies. Each dish blends the techniques from Jamaican and Costa Rican cooking. The oxtails for example are a Jamaican staple but where Limón's influence shines through is the Costa Rican Caribbean sauce they're served in. One of my other favorite menu items was the passion fruit dressing used on the salad served with the oxtails meal. It offered the perfect level of sweetness to anchor the rest of the savory meal. The passion fruit used in the dressing, like many of the restaurant's ingredients, is sourced from local vendors. Jason says his motivation for sourcing local foods is to both benefit the community and ensure that he always has the freshest ingredients. The dressing: a mixture of locally grown cinnamon, passion fruit, and sugar is the personification of this collaboration between Jason, local farmers, vendors, and the land.

Speaking with Jason, it was clear to see how much he loves his hometown. He boasts that his food is universal proudly saying, "Like Puerto Viejo, my food is for everyone." And I couldn't agree more, these meals made me feel at home while also giving me the chance to explore something new. If you find yourself in Puerto Viejo, I strongly suggest that you visit Black and White early in your trip—you'll definitely want time to go back for seconds!



OXTAILS AND TOSTONES



OXTAIL PLATE WITH RICE AND BEANS, RICE, AND PLANTAIN

BY NATHY'S WITH LOVE

*Celebrating four generations
of love and flavor at By
Nathy's Restaurant.*

By Joy Grant

Photography By Joy Grant

Walking into By Nathys, you're subtly prompted to take your shoes off. No one asks you directly, but the barefoot staff and the spotless mahogany floors signal you to follow suit. Sliding off my sandals felt like I was entering a home, and in a way I was. Nathalie Walters family has run this restaurant for four generations making sure to pass down a legacy of food and love.

When Nathalie's family immigrated to Limón from Jamaica over 80 years ago the region was less developed than it is now. There was no main road so they traveled by boat to get up and down the coast. Even during Nathalie's childhood, she remembers using torches with kerosene for light and fire to cook the food. But none of those



NATHALIE WALTERS IN HER RESTAURANT'S FRONT WINDOW

barriers kept the Lewis family from achieving their goals. When Nathalie's grandmother first started the business, she sold pastries out of the downstairs unit while the family lived upstairs. When Nathalie's mother passed away she left Nathalie's family the house. Since then Nathalie, with the help of her husband and children, has transformed it into a full restaurant expanding the menu just over a year ago to include homemade local dishes.

As an owner, Nathalie is determined to ensure that customers have an unparalleled experience, from the service to

the atmosphere to the ingredients in each dish. She wants to give people a place to come and have a great memory of Costa Rica for them to reflect on later when speaking about their travels. She emphasizes that she and her family remain welcoming and open to critique to ensure that customers are well cared for.

Brimming with pride Nathalie describes the food found in Limón as some of the best in the world. "Our food has flavor, it has rhythm, it has love." She describes cooking with love as transmitting those



CARIBBEAN RICE AND BEANS MEAL
WITH A WATERFRONT VIEW

warm feelings into each plate, and I couldn't agree more. When Nathalie's Grandmother ran the business, their family produced most of their ingredients only going to the store for staples like sugar, lard, and flour. She grew her produce and raised chickens and cattle on her farm. Although Nathalie's family no longer has a farm they honor her grandmother's traditions by growing as much as they can in their garden and sourcing as much as possible from local merchants. Refusing to use frozen or processed foods, each dish is made to order from scratch. Whether you opt for the banana pancakes or the vegetables in coconut sauce, you can taste the difference that comes from using the best ingredients available.

“Our food has flavor, it has rhythm, it has love.”

“You can eat Caribbean rice and beans anywhere but mine has my taste, my ancestors, my love, my family.” As I ate my lunch while staring out at the ocean, I could taste exactly what Nathalie so eloquently described. The spices all stood out and the blend of flavors showcased her family's time-tested techniques. While many restaurants in the area rely on their ingredients to represent Costa Rica, Nathalie, and her family emphasize their roots in every way, preparing each dish with care and precision.

Nathalie aims to provide her guests with an authentic experience and showcase her family's history. Whether it's the Coconut bread at breakfast or the fried fish at dinner, each plate is a chapter in the story of By Nathy's. While Puerto Viejo has changed a lot in the past 80 years, By Nathy's ensures that many of its traditions are upheld offering visitors an authentic experience full of flavor and love.



NATHALIE WALTERS AND HER DAUGHTER

Josefina's Kitchen



JOSEFINA MORALES-GALLIMORE IN HER KITCHEN

Uncover the heart and heritage of Puerto Viejo in a local cooking class one dish at a time.

By Joy Grant

Photography by Joy Grant and Nina Scott

Chicken, rice, and beans may seem simple, but for Josefina Morales-Gallimore, this meal tells a story of her family's resilience and strength - holding tightly to a culture they are deeply proud of. She spent a large portion of her life working on cruise ships as a chef and traveling the world. When she returned to Puerto Viejo she started hosting cooking classes in her home to connect with people visiting her hometown and share her family's story.



CARIBBEAN CHICKEN, RICE AND BEANS, PLANTAINS, AND SALAD

On the evening of our class, Nina and I rode our bikes to Josefina's, carefully following her landmarks and Google Maps. Located right in the middle of downtown, Josefina is central no matter what side of Puerto Viejo you're staying in. She met us on the porch with a smile and ushered us in with the rest of the guests. Joining us were three other pairs of travelers, all of us from the United States. Josefina has been hosting cooking classes in her home for the last two years. Her goal when

starting these classes was to connect with people and share her family's story. Her love for storytelling and connecting people showed as she finished setting the table. Eight chairs circle the island in her kitchen which sits facing the cooktop, giving us all a front-row seat.



COOKING CLASS PARTICIPANTS ASSEMBLING PLATES

Before the class officially started, Josefina moved deliberately about the kitchen grabbing different spices and ingredients, naming them as she sat them around the counter. If you've ever had the pleasure of visiting a Caribbean woman's house you know that being in the kitchen with them is a sacred practice. And even more so if they're taking the time to show you how to make something. The blend of peppers, garlic, and thyme wraps around you, warm and



JOSEFINA DEMONSTRATING COOKING TECHNIQUES

inviting, as if welcoming you home.

The meal's starter sat on the table as we settled in. A savory yet refreshing pico de gallo and tortilla chips were ready for each pair of participants to dive in. Freshly cut coconuts sat positioned with a hibiscus perfectly garnishing the lid. Once everyone arrived, Josefina stood in the middle of her kitchen wiping her hands on a dish towel, and began to tell her family's Puerto Viejo origin story. Her family arrived in the Province of Limón in the late 1800s as migrant workers. With them, they brought their traditions, language, and of course their food. Over the next fifty years, more Jamaicans would follow and have a huge impact on Limón's food. Now, in Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast, Jamaican dishes and ingredients can be found in most restaurants. As Josefina shared her story, she created a space where we all felt comfortable sharing our own.

Josefina reminisced on the large Sunday meals that her family would have. “You’d cook early before church and would return home to dinner already done.” The meal we cooked with Josefina was heavily inspired by those Sunday dinners. While all of the food prep was done before we got there Josefina walked us through each step. “We always wash our meat” she emphasized, looking around at all of us. “You can use vinegar, lemons, or lime, but it must be washed.” Josefina took her time introducing each ingredient and talking through their origins, different uses, and why she prepares them the way she does. After she added the rice and beans to the rice cooker, it was time to start cooking the chicken. Already marinated, it just needed to be added to the skillet. When Josefina asked for volunteers to help with the meat I knew it was my time to shine. Seated closest to Josefina I took this as my chance to learn the skills that I knew would later be invaluable. As I began adding the meat into the pan, she let me know that I didn’t want it to get too crowded and she simply grabbed another pan. When the pan got hot and the grease began to pop she chuckled as I jumped out of the way but made sure to guide me on how to do it correctly.



JOY GRANT ASSISTING JOSEFINA DURING COOKING CLASS

By the end of the meal, everyone had the chance to help cook. We took turns with the chicken, cutting the plantain, and dressing the salad. An assembly line was made to help prepare each plate and make sure that everyone had a good healthy share giving the experience even more of a family feel. With our plates full of chicken, rice and beans, plantains, and salad we were all ready to dig in.

Josefina’s class is about more than just cooking. It’s a cultural exchange, a history lesson, and a way to connect to the heart of Puerto Viejo. We all left the class with an appreciation for the simplicity and richness of the meal and a deeper understanding of Limón’s history and Afro-Costa Rican culture. If you’re in Puerto Viejo and looking for activities, make sure to pay Josefina a visit for an unforgettable experience.

More Than Just A Destination

The Power of Knowing the History of Where You Travel

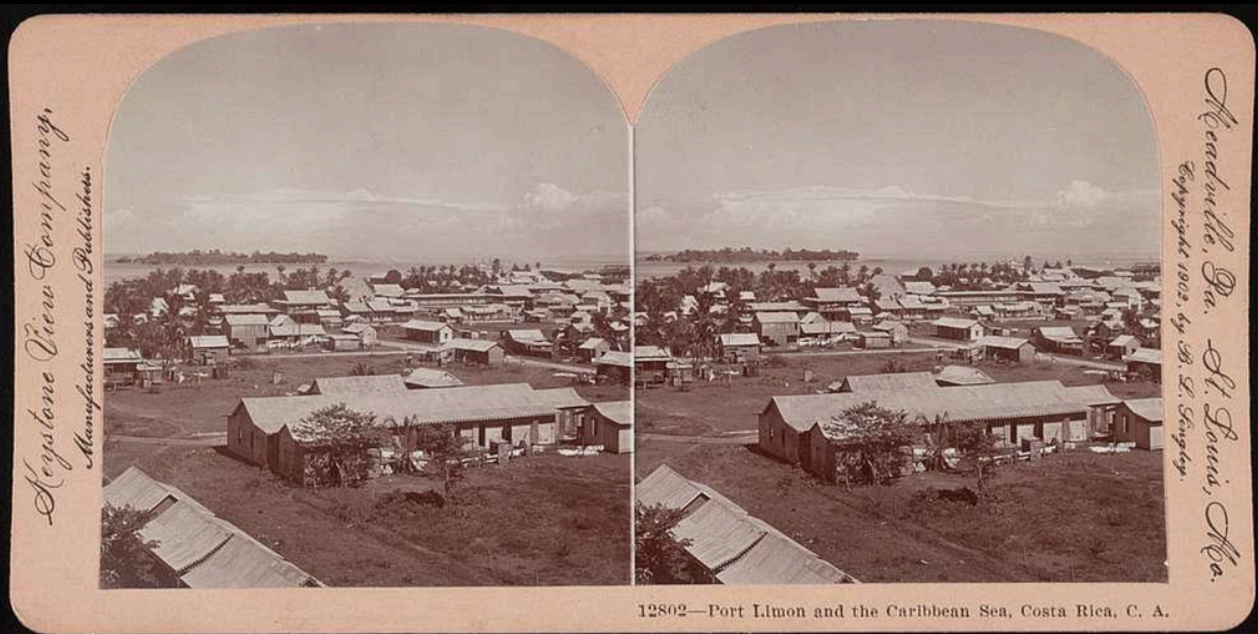
By Joy Grant

Travel is and always has been about more than simply sightseeing. Even if you're in a city just for a day, the place you're visiting has been shaped by cultural, historical, and political factors that led to your arrival. Being even slightly aware of that background can transform a simple trip into a lasting and meaningful experience.

My first time out of the country was during my senior year of high school on a trip to Italy led by a couple of my history teachers. At every destination, some key fact was used to emphasize the location's importance and relevance. At the time a lot of the information felt useless, but now those are the details I remember the most. Those stories helped to shape my perspective and enabled me to discover my place in the world. Staring up at Michaelangelo's mural on the Sistine Chapel's ceiling meant so much more knowing the context of his life. I found out that he once viewed this commission as an inconvenient distraction (given that he had to learn a new technique) and it's now considered one of his most beautiful works. I recall this detail often in the midst of pivotal moments in my own life.

That experience made me realize how much more meaningful travel is when we engage with a place's history which is something Dr. Carmen Hutchinson-Miller emphasized when we spoke. Dr. Hutchinson-Miller is a black-conscious Afro-Costa Rican historian whose life's mission is to fill in the historical silences that have left her ancestors and her community out of the narrative. Her emphasis on history humanizing people and places stuck out most during our conversation. She highlighted that understanding the struggles and triumphs of a community adds layers of empathy and respect to our experiences. She also believes that learning the history and listening to locals can help you be more realistic about your expectations, be more humble, and prevent you from being unintentionally disrespectful.

Traveling should always be treated as a privilege that comes with responsibility. Whether it's a few informed Google searches or booking a tour with a local guide, going the extra mile will always be worth it. The least we can do as guests is be mindful of our surroundings and look at these adventures as an opportunity to learn and grow. By taking a conscious approach to travel, we not only enrich our own experiences but also show respect and gratitude to the communities that welcome us.



PUERTO LIMÓN, COSTA RICA 1902, PHOTO CREDIT: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

GENERATIONS OF STRENGTH

A look into the history of Jamaican migrant workers in Costa Rica, how they built a legacy in Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, and how Black expats and tourists can responsibly engage with the Afro-Costa Rican community.

By Joy Grant:

Finding Home Abroad: Black Americans and the Legacy of Limón's Migrant Workers

During my time in Costa Rica, I had the privilege of speaking in depth with Afro-Costa Rican chef, Josefina Morales-Gallimore. In her kitchen, I discovered details about many dynamic culinary traditions that have lasted the test of time, being passed down through generations in her family. It was evident that behind her flavorful recipes lay a much richer history. Josefina's ancestors, like many in Puerto Viejo and across the province of Limón, were part of a larger story of perseverance and adaptation.

In 2023, around 1.5 million Americans vacationed in Costa Rica. Over the past 2 years, the country has been named "Destination of the

Year", crowned as the best country to retire in, and received countless awards for tourism. As of 2016, 70,000 Americans have moved to Costa Rica. While the majority of them are retirees looking for a soft place to land, many of them are young Black Americans searching for the same solace.

For Black Americans, Costa Rica is often seen as an oasis. In her *Love Letter to Costa Rica*, Nina Scott shares how the country helped her feel safe in her blackness—a sentiment that resonates with many. Following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and the racial tensions that erupted in its wake, many African Americans aided by the

flexibility of their newly remote jobs, seized the opportunity to leave. [Dr. Natasha-Gordon Chipembere](#), an Afro-Costa Rican professor specializing in African Diasporic literature and the author of [Finding La Negrita](#), relocated to Costa Rica for similar reasons. “We understood as my son turned 13, he was going to be inside a criminalized Black body, and we wanted something different” she recalls.

“We understood as my son turned 13, he was going to be inside a criminalized Black body, and we wanted something different.”

While I always feel safer in black cities I don't always feel fully accepted. My American accent reveals my origins, and my fragile relationship with my homeland often switches the energy in interactions. However, when I arrived in Costa Rica, I instantly felt a bond with the Black community. That connection deepened as I began to learn more about Limón's history and realized that this innate understanding was rooted in something bigger. The stories of Afro-Costa Ricans—many of whom have experienced a cultural disconnect from their Jamaican ancestors—helped me better understand the complexities of identity and belonging. This separation mirrors how black people across the diaspora have struggled with staying tied to their roots.

The more I explored Limón's history, the clearer it became that this community's openness and resilience were forged through adversity. By learning from the history, respecting the culture, and contributing to its preservation we can play an active role in uplifting the Afro-Costa Rican community, learn from it, and play a role in ensuring their stories are heard.



PLAYA NEGRA BEACH, PHOTO CREDIT: JOY GRANT



RAILROAD TRACK, PHOTO CREDIT: KIM DAE JEUNG

Black Workers and the Railroad That Changed Limón

Black people have been in Costa Rica since Columbus's first expedition to the country.¹ However, the first large wave of Black people in Costa Rica occurred during the transatlantic slave trade. Enslaved Africans (who were likely purchased from the English in Jamaica²) were brought to work on cacao farms in Matina, Limón, plantations in the Central Valley, and cattle farms in Guanacaste along the Pacific coast. Over time, some gained their freedom until slavery was abolished in 1824.¹

The second largest wave, beginning in 1872, left an imprint that can still be felt today. Workers were brought in to support the expansive railroad project designed to connect Costa Rica's Capital City San Jose to the Caribbean Coast and provide an easier route for coffee to be exported through the Atlantic Ocean.

In her research, Dr. Carmen Hutchinson-Miller, a Limón native and an Afro-Costa Rican historian, notes that to supply the manpower required for this project the government

needed to recruit a foreign workforce. Originally European workers were preferred. However, when they did not show up in the numbers that they hoped for legislation was passed to allow Caribbeans and people of African descent to immigrate for work.³

This shift appealed to Jamaicans facing economic instability under the British Empire after the sugar industry's collapse. The Costa Rican railroad project offered a lifeline, a chance for steady work, and the ability for many to support their families in a time of need. Following this change in legislation, representatives and boats were promptly sent out to recruit workers.³ Between December 1872 and mid-1874, almost 1,400 people of Caribbean descent arrived in Costa Rica, most of which were Jamaican.⁴

The company chosen to build the railroad was run by Minor Keith whose family was known across Central America for railway construction. Originally, Costa Rica planned to pay for the

railroad using a loan they received for its construction. However, the project was more cumbersome than they expected. Multiple things worked against this team. Costa Rica's jungle was far more unfavorable than they expected. Over 100 miles of forests, mountains, and wetlands had to be cleared using only hand tools. On top of the physical working conditions, rampant malaria, and yellow fever outbreaks drove costs up. Around 5,000 men died during the railroad's construction.

Throughout this project, both the Northern Railroad Company and the Costa Rican government repeatedly experienced funding issues. While they were able to agree on how to get the work completed and paid for, the laborers were left out of the equation. In 1884, Keith received a land concession as payment from Costa Rica. The concession awarded him 9% of the country's land, most located in Limón with a 99-year lease. He was later able to obtain an outside loan and finished the railroad in 1890. Instead of the wages they were promised many of the workers were given land. This land was mainly located in areas the Northern Railroad Company (which would eventually become the United Fruit Company, co-founded and led by Minor Keith) found unvaluable. Among those who received land were Josefina's ancestors, who were part of the founding families who settled in Puerto Viejo.

“My family was left stranded and completely disconnected.”



SHIPWRECK ON MANZANILLO BEACH
PHOTO CREDIT: JUAN PABLO VERA

The Price of Survival: From Broken Promises to New Roots

Josefina explained that it was common knowledge in her community that the promises made to them were never kept. “They told them they'd be paid and boats would be there to return them home in a year,” Josefina said, “but most never saw Jamaica again.” This sense of estrangement, of being left behind, became part of the collective memory passed down through generations.

“My family was left stranded and completely disconnected” Josefina explained with a voice full of emotion. With no electricity, post offices, or funds to return home on their own, many had no way of letting their loved ones know what happened and why they hadn't returned to Jamaica. These laborers, many of which were skilled and educated, risked everything for what was supposed to be a temporary job and found themselves stuck in a foreign country. Cut off from the world they knew and loved, they were forced to navigate a new land and the stark reality that they may never see their homeland

For Josefina, this severance from her ancestral home runs deep. “The first time I visited Jamaica, I tried to locate my family, but I didn’t know enough of their information to find anyone,” she shared. She described how she loved being there, but felt detached as well. Like many descendants, she carries the weight of her Jamaican heritage, but the generations of distance have made it harder to maintain a direct connection.

Though the details of how Josefina’s ancestors adapted in Costa Rica were not often shared, the general understanding within her family was clear: they had to learn to make a life in a foreign land. In my conversation with Dr. Gordon-Chipembere, she pointed out that people stayed in Costa Rica for different reasons. With their only payment coming in the form of land, many lacked the resources to leave, making returning home a challenge. Others, after spending almost 20 years in Limón, started families and were an integral part of the region’s development. For some, Costa Rica became a path forward, especially with Jamaica’s limited job opportunities.

As more Caribbean migrants arrived in search of work, Jamaicans remained the largest group. By 1927, the census recorded 19,136 Black Jamaicans in the country, with the majority in Limón.⁵ Many of these workers provided critical labor for the United Fruit Company’s banana plantations. With the help of Black migrants, Costa Rica became the world’s leading banana producer and yet they faced significant hostility.⁵

They suffered dangerous working conditions combating disease and extreme racial politics.⁶ Neither migrants nor their children were granted citizenship until 1948, consequently leaving them stateless and without access to government resources for decades. To make matters worse, an unofficial law barred the Black population from traveling beyond Turrialba, which is one of the last provinces before the capital.⁵ While these oppressive barriers may have hindered their progress in Costa Rica it didn’t stop them from building a unique and steadfast community.



PUERTO VIEJO LOCALS RUNNING ERRANDS
PHOTO CREDIT: JOY GRANT

Strength in Unity

“They had to rely on each other and their knowledge from home to survive” Josefina explained when asked about the challenges her family faced. One key aspect of their survival was the strong sense of solidarity. Josefina remembers a time when “there used to be an exchange within the community, a lifestyle of helping without expectations.” People traded goods, services, and support, allowing them to endure despite the challenges of being in an unfamiliar place.

Myrna Pierre Dixon, a lawyer who grew up in Limón and a descendant of Jamaican immigrants, also shared that cacao beans were often used as a form of currency within the community. With little access to formal money, people relied on bartering and alternative currencies like cacao to meet their needs. This system of exchange became a vital part of how they sustained themselves in the early years, reinforcing their resourcefulness and resilience.

Limón's physical and cultural insulation from the rest of Costa Rica sometimes worked to the community's advantage. With fewer outside influences and less oversight from the central government, they were able to cultivate their own systems of commerce, education, and social structures. This separation allowed them to build a thriving economy, one that served their unique needs and values. As Myrna explained, "We had our own Black Wall Street—wide streets, thriving businesses, and a bustling local economy. People from all over wanted to be part of our little world."



PUERTO LIMÓN 1880, PHOTO CREDIT: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

PRESENT DAY PUERTO LIMÓN, PHOTO CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

By creating an economic hub independent of the rest of Costa Rica, the community in Limón not only survived but flourished. These circumstances gave them the freedom to shape their own identity and preserve their traditions, while also building a self-sustaining local economy. In many ways, their isolation became a source of strength, allowing them to grow a vibrant, resilient community.

Changing Tides

As soon as they knew they'd be in Costa Rica for the long haul they began to set up a structure that felt familiar. Limón began to grow as almost an extension of Jamaica. Dr. Gordon-Chipembere describes Limón as "facing the Black Atlantic." Closed off to Costa Rica but open to the rest of the world specifically the Caribbean, allowing their culture and traditions to be preserved. She also notes that the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), as well as small businesses and churches, were the economic structures that helped to maintain the sense of community and identity that held them all together. This identity can still be seen today. Limónese Calypso and reggae music can be heard while riding down the street or on a night out. Stewed chicken, plantain, and rice and beans are readily available at restaurants up and down the coast. Rum punch is served at Christmas and pan bon is served on Easter. English is still the dominant language, and there is a movement to preserve and officially recognize Limónese Creole, a Limón-specific dialect of Jamaican Patois.

The journey towards equality and recognition reached a milestone when Luis Guillermo-Solis, the first president of Afro-Costa Rican descent, was elected in 2014. As president, he established the Ministry of Afro-Costa Rican Affairs driven by the advocacy of the Afro-Costa Rican community. His election was followed by the UN declaring 2015-2025 the decade of the Afro-descendent. The decade's theme was "People of African descent: recognition, justice, and development." Additionally, Black History Month, officially established in Costa Rica in 2018, is observed every August as a time to celebrate and recognize the Black community. Afro-Costa Ricans have come a long way continuing to grow upon the foundation their ancestors built, but despite notable strides, work remains to be done. As tourists and expats reap the benefits of the generations of hard work that built this community, we must honor this legacy.



COSTA RICA'S BLACK HISTORY MONTH GRAND GALA PARADE 2024
PHOTO CREDIT: RAFAEL BARRIENTOS GERMÉ



PUERTO LIMÓN , COSTA RICA, PHOTO CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

A Shared Future: Supporting Afro-Costa Ricans Through Respectful Integration

As Limón continues to celebrate its heritage and forge new paths forward, the rise in Black expats choosing to call Costa Rica home is a testament to the province's appeal. However, newcomers must recognize and respect the contributions of Afro-Costa Ricans. In each of my conversations with Josefina, Myrna, and Dr. Gordon-Chipembere we discussed ways in which tourists and expats can recognize the legacy of Afro-Costa Ricans and ethically experience this beautiful country. For Black expats, this means learning the history, acknowledging the generations of Afro-Costa Ricans who have fought for their place in this country, and for Americans especially, recognizing the privilege they now have.

For many African Americans, moving to Costa Rica marks the first time they automatically assume a position of power, with the U.S. dollar stretching further than the local currency. Expats must be mindful of their impact on the local community and resources, avoiding the pitfalls of gentrification and remembering why Costa Rica appealed to them in the first place—to ensure that their presence is a benefit, not a burden. To truly integrate, learning the language is a strong start, knowing Spanish shows a dedication to becoming a part of the culture. Black expats should also remain aware of the people around them and ensure that their personal community includes the locals who motivated their relocation and whose ancestors made it possible. Engaging in social initiatives, volunteer work, or advocacy, while amplifying Afro-Costa Rican voices, can contribute to a shared future that honors the past while promoting growth and equity.

Limón's history, though full of adversity, is a story of perseverance and of a people who turned hardship into strength. Jamaican migrant workers were never meant to view this land as their home and still, they fought to build a place where future generations, including those of us from outside, could find belonging. As we continue to engage with Costa Rica, we, as visitors and expats, must meaningfully and respectfully support this beautiful community. By ensuring that our presence adds value to the lives of Afro-Costa Ricans we honor generations of hard work and resilience.

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FISHERMEN AT PUNTA UVA, PHOTO CREDIT: JOY GRANT

A Day in Puerto Viejo

Puerto Viejo de Talamanca (often referred to as Puerto Viejo) is a coastal town, located in the province of Limón. Nestled into the southern Caribbean shores, this eclectic city has something to offer everyone.

By Joy Grant

Photography By Joy Grant and Nina Scott

1. Breakfast at Black and White

Suggested Dishes: Oxtails and Gallo Pinto

Why: These hearty options will keep you full throughout your morning adventures.

2. Cultural Excursion

Joy's Pick

Morning Activity: Tour the Bri Bri Indigenous community (Book with a local company like Gandoca Tours)

What You'll Do: Learn how to make traditional chocolate and immerse yourself in the local culture.

Tip: Go in the morning to spend the afternoon at a nearby waterfall.

3. Lunch at By Nathy's

Nina's Pick

What to Order: Gallo Pinto with Caribbean Chicken or

Don't Forget: Grab a coconut tart to go for a sweet treat later.

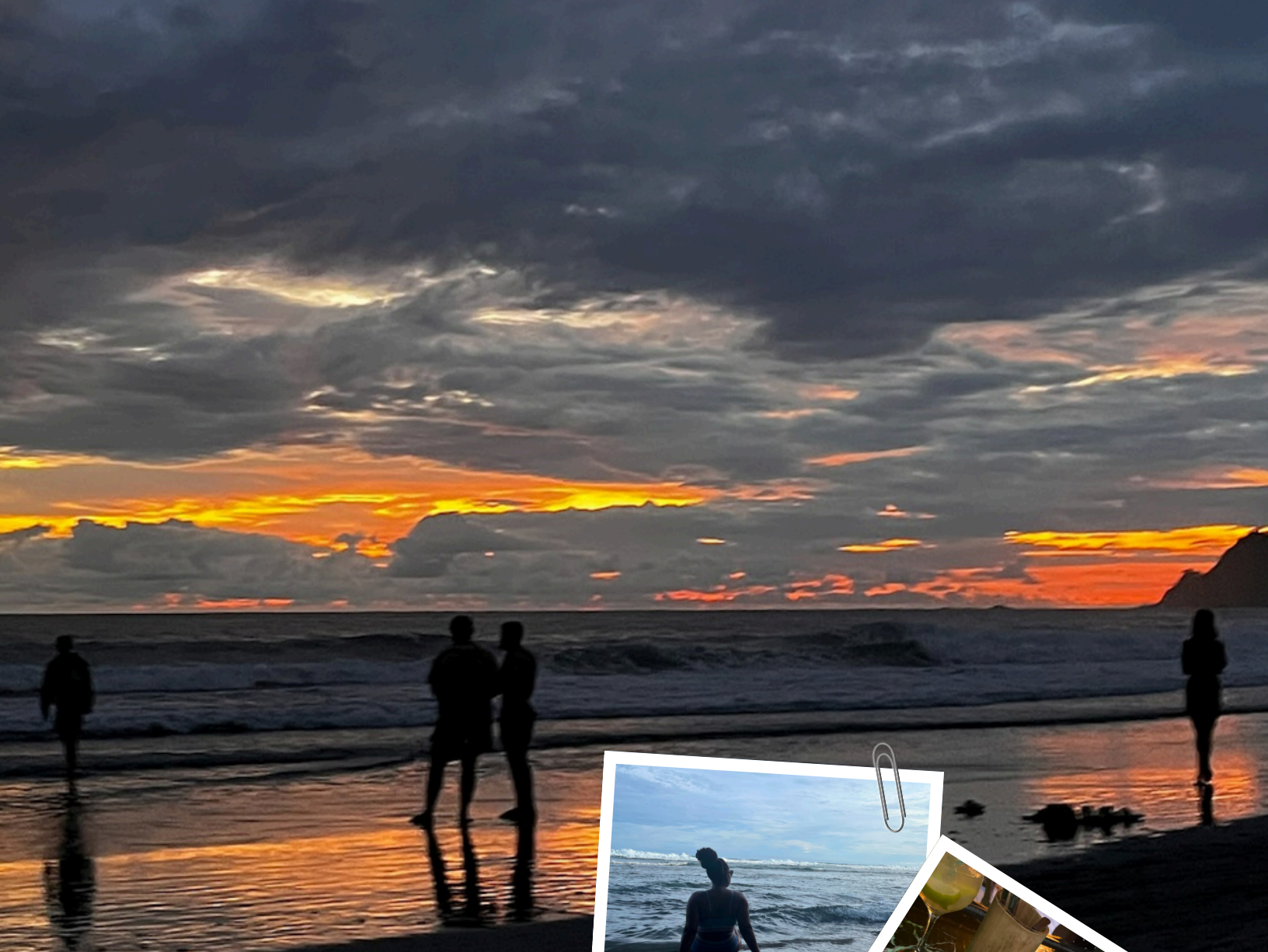


PHOTOS TOP TO BOTTOM:

JOY COOKING CACAO BEANS

NINA AND JOY AT BRIBRI WATERFALLS

HOMEMADE CHOCOLATE ON FIRE-ROASTED BANANAS



4. Enjoy the Sunset

Where to Go: Playa Negra, Playa Cocles, or Punta Uva

Why: Each location offers stunning views of the sunset, making for a perfect end to your day of exploration.



5. Dinner at Tamara

Suggested Dishes: Red Snapper or Rondon (Coconut Seafood Soup)

P.S. This restaurant is as good as everyone says!



6. Go Dancing

Where to Dance: Hot Rocks, Johnnys, or Salsa Brava

Why: These spots are known for their vibrant atmosphere, making them great places to unwind and enjoy the local nightlife, if you're in town on a Thursday Hot Rocks has lady's night at 8 where a local band gives a show worth making time for!



PHOTOS TOP TO BOTTOM:

JOY AT PLAYA COCLES

RED SNAPPER MEAL FROM TAMARA RESTAURANT

X-FACTOR PERFORMING AT HOT ROCKS

LOCAL BUSINESS HIGHLIGHT

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The Land of the Turtles: Community, Conservation & Care



TURTLES SUNBATHING IN TORTUGUERO NATIONAL PARK, PHOTO CREDIT: NICOLAS BOIVIN

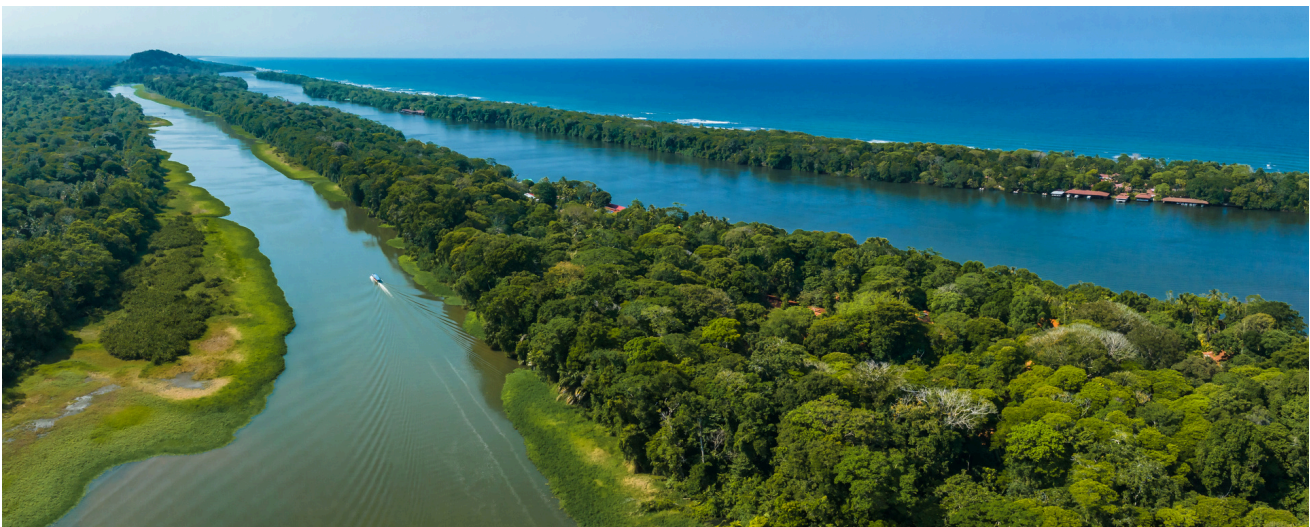
A Journey Through Community-Led Conservation, Sea Turtle Resilience, and Ecotourism's Role in Reviving Endangered Species

By Nina Scott

When you're deep in the heart of a tropical jungle, you start to understand what it really means to feel alive. For me, as a marine biologist, it means being completely surrounded by living beings thriving right beside you, underneath you, and towering above you. It's humbling to be a small part of something so vast and vibrant. There's a certain magic in feeling both tiny and full of life at the same time. I know you've probably heard this before, but it can't be overstated: Costa Rica is an ecotourist's paradise. Tortuguero National Park, in particular, is a prime example of how community-centered conservation and ecotourism can successfully restore endangered species and support the local economy.⁶

Biogeography of Costa Rica and Tortuguero

Costa Rica may only take up 0.03% of Earth's landmass (which is about the size of West Virginia), but it holds an astonishing 6% of the world's biodiversity.³ That's roughly 500,000 species of plants and wildlife!¹ Think of Costa Rica as nature's version of a metropolis, buzzing with life in every corner. Just like a city, its inhabitants have creatively adapted to survive—forming microhabitats, hunting strategies, and complex interdependencies. Whether you're trekking through the jungle or diving into the sea, you're surrounded by this intricate web of life, all working together to survive.



AREIAL VIEW OF TORTUGUERO NATIONAL PARK, PHOTO CREDIT: ALEX KANE

Caribbean coast, Tortuguero is accessible primarily by boat, winding through its maze of rivers and canals.¹⁰ The village of Tortuguero, home to about 1,500 people, sits on a swampy peninsula flanked by the Caribbean Sea on one side and the Tortuguero River on the other.¹⁰

The Ecology and Importance of Sea Turtles

Tortuguero—meaning "land of the turtles"—lives up to its name.⁷ Sea turtles primarily

Costa Rica's hotspot of biodiversity is no accident. The country sits on a narrow land bridge known as the Isthmus of Panama, a vital connection between two continents.¹ About 150 million years ago, species that had evolved separately were suddenly meeting for the first time.¹ Throw in rich volcanic soil and a diverse range of ecosystems, and it's no wonder this small country supports such an incredible variety of life.¹

But nestled in an even smaller corner of this biodiversity-rich region is Tortuguero National Park. Located on Costa Rica's northeastern

reside in the ocean migrating to various coastal waters in search of food, mates, and ideal nesting sites.¹¹ This national park is home to the largest nesting ground of green sea turtles in the Western Hemisphere which makes it an important place to protect.¹⁰ Thousands of turtles including green sea turtles, leatherback turtles, and hawksbill sea turtles, pass through these volcanic black sand beaches to lay their eggs between July and October.¹⁰ It's truly a



BONES FROM A TURTLE ATTACKED DURING NESTING
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT

sight to behold: at its peak under the moon's light, the beaches are filled with female turtles, some of which weigh up to 800 pounds!¹⁰

Although sea turtles have nested since the Jurassic period, the process is still quite delicate. Both mothers and their young face serious threats of predation at every stage of nesting and returning to the ocean.² To begin, the female turtles must travel ashore, often navigating long distances, to find a suitable nesting spot.¹¹ Once they reach the shore, they enter what is commonly referred to as a trance-like state.¹⁰ This is crucial because nesting



DECOY NEST MADE BY A SEA TURTLE
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT

requires a great deal of energy, and the turtle is at its most vulnerable on land to large predators. During this hypnotic-like state, her heart rate will slow down allowing her to conserve energy while digging out a nest. She'll also block out disturbances and threats, such as noises or movements nearby. After digging the nest, she lays her eggs, disguises the site, then begins digging a false nest to evade predators like iguanas that prey on the eggs, and then returns to the sea. After about 8 weeks, the baby turtles would have hatched from their shells and begun their journey back to the sea. At that point, the beach becomes a hunting ground for baby turtles and only about 50% percent make it to the ocean and less than 1% make it to adulthood.¹⁰

Despite these harsh odds, sea turtles have evolved to lay an abundance of eggs to offset the high mortality rate and produce successful populations.¹⁰ And the world is all the better for it. Sea turtles are keystone species responsible for regulating many coastal ecosystems and fisheries that we all depend on.⁷

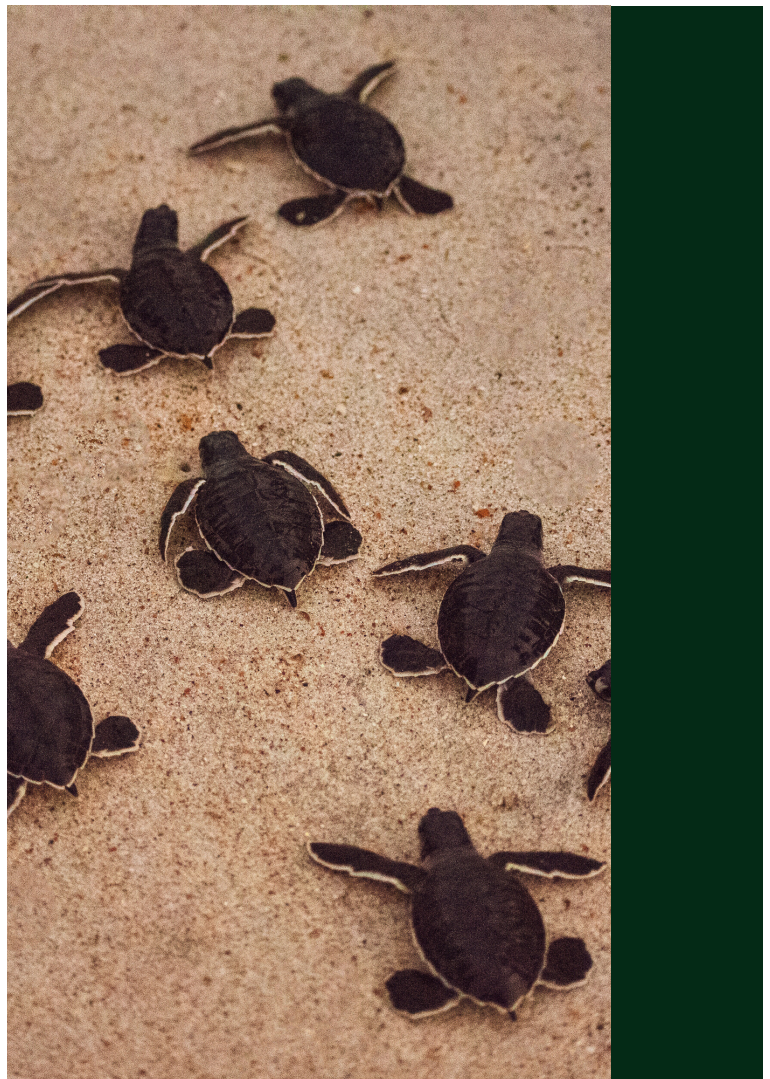
Each species supports the ecosystems in its own way. Green sea turtles are herbivores and support fish, crustaceans, and shellfish by grazing and maintaining their seagrass beds.¹¹ The hawksbill helps keep sponge overgrowth at bay which would otherwise outcompete coral for space and resources on the reef which is commonly referred to as the rainforest of the sea.¹¹ Finally, the large and majestic leatherback turtles which primarily feed on jellyfish, stop

jellyfish blooms (a rapid spike in a jellyfish population within a short period) which would otherwise disrupt the aquatic food web. By playing these essential roles in various ecosystems, sea turtles help maintain the structure and function of marine habitats as well as coastal communities for both humans and animals that depend on them.¹¹

I was fortunate enough to be able to witness a 200-pound green sea turtle nesting so close to me that I could have touched her. But I wouldn't dare. The experience was carefully regulated by park rangers patrolling the shores, volunteers collecting data, and guides teaching tourists.⁶ They restricted the use of flashlights and phones which somehow made the experience feel more special. Instead, my guide held a red light and I remained squatting down in plain view of circular bouncy eggs falling into their nest. Our compliance with the regulations helps to ensure a positive nesting experience for the mother. A disturbed female turtle may abandon her nest and if startled enough she and her young may avoid nesting in the area in the future altogether.¹¹ I also learned that Tortuguero Beach is significant due to the iron in the black sand resulting in a warmer nest. This is crucial because a hatchling's sex is determined by sand temperature and warmer temperature results in more females. Since females tend to return to nest on beaches near their birthplace Tortuguero receives many returns.³

Combatting Exploitation

But, what could be more dangerous to turtles than dinosaurs, jaguars, and birds of prey combined? Well, that's where we come in. While Tortuguero feels untouched at one point it was extremely exploited. The surrounding jungle should be a late-stage forest (a matured forest that encompasses old large trees suitable for a complex food web) however, it is now a regenerating forest. In a conversation with my guide, I learned that before it became a national park about 70% of the forest was logged for cedar and mahogany. Similarly, turtles were over-harvested for food, shells, and oil to support the local economy.⁶ While Indigenous communities in the region sustainably harvested



GREEN SEA TURTLE HATCHLINGS, PHOTO CREDIT: PENNY BRITT

sea turtles, using their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), taking only what they needed seasonally, this changed at the arrival of European settlers. At that point, large-scale harvesting and international trade of turtles began, killing more turtles than could naturally be replaced.⁹ A practice that was once used to exclusively supply this small village became a part of the turtle supply to fulfill the demands of Costa Rica and the global market.¹² As a result, the global population dropped dramatically driving them near the brink of extinction.³

Ecotourism as an Economic Reframe

In 1959, Dr. Archie Carr founded The Sea Turtle Conservancy to raise global awareness about the dark state of sea turtles through his research.¹⁰ By 1963, this attention led to a ban on sea turtle hunting in Tortuguero, and just over a decade later, in 1975, Tortuguero National Park was established, marking Costa Rica's early steps towards becoming a leader in conservation.¹² However, imposing conservation policies without considering local communities (a practice known as top-down conservation) usually disrupts traditional practices. It can even stigmatize local people, inadvertently driving poaching or other unsustainable practices.⁷ In contrast, Tortuguero's success lies in the community-centered management strategy. Instead of harvesting sea turtles for income, the village shifted its economic focus to eco-tourism, providing a sustainable income source. Today, locals work as tour guides, park rangers, and business owners catering to the many tourists who come to witness sea turtle nesting.⁶ This strategy not only employs locals but also ushers them back to stewardship while motivating others to take part.



TORTUGUERO KAYAK ECOTOUR
PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT

Ecotourism is meant to benefit all parties—travelers, local communities, and the environment. It's a form of responsible tourism that involves exploring natural areas to fund conservation efforts and support the livelihoods of people in high-impact regions.⁶ If you're interested in participating in ecotourism in Tortuguero there are many fulfilling ways to do so such as viewing sea turtles nesting at night, volunteering in research, kayaking through lush canals, or taking a night hike through the lively jungle. I highly recommend Sambola Tours for an authentic experience. To fully embrace this adventure, I suggest staying in Tortuguero for 3-4 nights, rather than a day trip. This gives you time to engage with locals and immerse yourself in the village's way of life. Watching life unfold

here: children playing, dogs roaming around, and the locals going about their day, I realized that there was a beautiful balance and ease in this village that many places seem to have lost.

Tortuguero rebounded due to diligent management and today stands as a shining example for the world of what we can achieve. For me, Tortuguero was a place of reconnection—with nature, with myself, and with a deeper sense of what it means to be alive. If you ever find yourself voyaging down the rivers of Tortuguero, take a moment to find solace in hope, as Jane Goodall (esteemed primatologist and conservationist) said: “Hope is what enables us to keep going in the face of adversity. It is what we desire to happen, but we must be prepared to work hard to make it so”.⁶ You're headed to a village that embodies this spirit of hope, let's help them make it so.



NINA SCOTT AT TORTUGUERO NATIONAL PARK TRAILHEAD ENTRANCE, PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT



CANAL IN TORTUGUERO, PHOTO CREDIT: NINA SCOTT

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Discover Relaxation at Hacienda Orosi

By Joy Grant

If you have time to spare before a flight leaving San Jose, Hacienda Orosi is the perfect place to rest and reflect on your trip.

*Photography by
Joy Grant*

After a busy week of exploring, I chose to visit the thermal baths at Hacienda Orosi for an opportunity to relax and unwind. Hacienda Orosi is a tranquil retreat located near Cartago in the Orosi Valley that offers thermal baths, walking trails, a farm, and more. Thermal baths are one of the many things that Costa Rica is known for. With six active volcanoes and 61 dormant or extinct, the country offers many opportunities to dip your toe into this relaxing excursion.

Why Hacienda Orosi?

Relaxation at Its Best

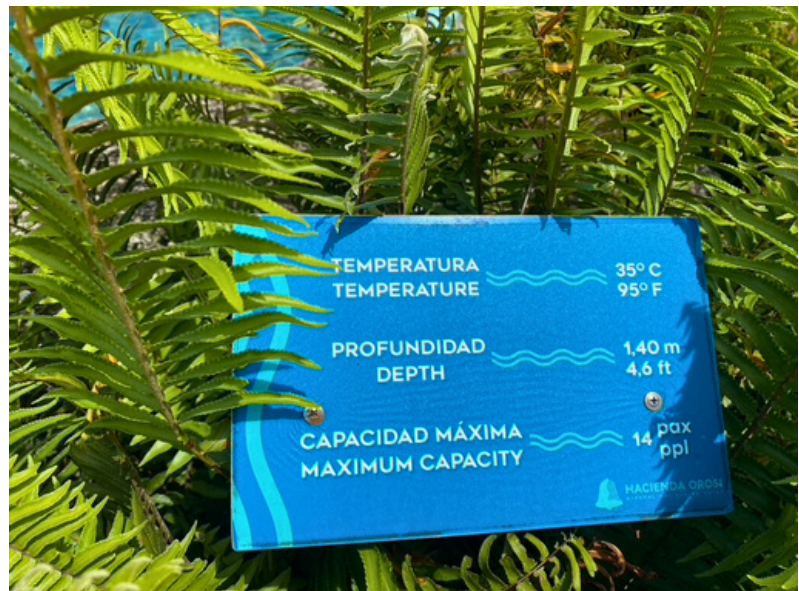
- There are seven different pools with thermal mineral water varying from 93°F (34°C) to 102°F (39°C). The hot spring day pass also includes a mud mask, which is the perfect touch to give your stay a truly spa-like experience
- The grounds are meticulously kept from the lush gardens to the bathrooms. Each day pass includes a towel and locker. The lockers were clean, offering the perfect space to prepare for your day or get ready to go home.
- The staff were eager to greet me and even went out of their way to help when my Uber driver tried to drop me off at the wrong entrance, and when I had one too many questions about the location.



JOY GRANT IN THERMAL BATH OVERLOOKING OROSI VALLEY



PLATTER WITH MUD MASK BALLS



SIGN DISPLAYING THERMAL BATH DETAILS



HACIENDA OROSI GROUNDS



THERMAL BATH OVERLOOKING THE OROSI VALLEY

Stunning Views

- Upon entering, you're immediately greeted by the breathtaking landscape of Orosi Valley. Nestled among lush mountains and rainforests, the thermal baths transport you to a resort-like spa experience. The views can be taken in from anywhere on the property, whether you're enjoying lunch on the beautiful terrace or relaxing in one of the seven soothing baths—the stunning horizons are always within view.
- The longer I stayed, the more the tension melted from my shoulders. With birds softly chirping in the distance and the cool crisp air brushing against my skin I couldn't help but surrender to the calm, allowing all my worries to drift away.
- Later, as I enjoyed lunch on the terrace—savoring each bite of my burger and fries—I felt overwhelming gratitude. The peaceful solitude and stunning scenery made it easy to meditate on the journey and all the new experiences this trip had brought me.

Easily Accessible

- If you're staying in San Jose you can easily travel to the Orosi Valley by bus or Uber.
- The \$60 day pass gives you access to everything you need to enjoy your stay.
- Book your thermal hot spring retreat [here](#)

Hacienda Orosi provides the perfect opportunity to experience one of Costa Rica's many natural wonders. The thermal springs are a great option for travelers who are looking for a brief, relaxing, and affordable escape from the city.



THERMAL BATHS WITH WIDE VIEW OF OROSI VALLEY

Thank You for Reading!



Thank you for being a part of Joyy Meets World! This magazine is a celebration of the rich stories, cultures, and histories that unite us all, and your support helps bring these narratives to life. We hope our journey inspires your own adventures and deepens your connection to the incredible diversity of the world around us.

From all of us at Joyy Meets World, we are grateful for your time, curiosity, and passion for exploring beyond the surface.

Be sure to follow us on Instagram [@JoyyMeetsWorld](https://www.instagram.com/JoyyMeetsWorld) to stay connected, share your stories, and join us on this journey of discovery.

Here's to many more journeys together!



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