TRAVEL

Costa Rica: The Yogi's Guide

Nosara and the Nicoya Peninsula, the two climates, sacred places, entry rules, health and safety, checked and dated



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YOGIDE

Free sample

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Before you begin

Costa Rica is a small country between two oceans: the Pacific to the west, the Caribbean to the east, and a spine of volcanoes and mountains in between. For three decades it has drawn people who want to practise yoga in nature. Many of them look for a retreat or a teacher training there. The beach of Guiones, in Nosara, on the Nicoya Peninsula, has become one of the names that come up most often.

Yogide is a site about yoga as it was born in India: traditional, textual, sacred. So let us be clear on the first page. Costa Rica has no ancient yoga lineage. No Indian teacher founded an ashram here centuries ago, no Sanskrit text was copied here, and the retreats and trainings you will find are modern, international, mostly taught in English. That does not make them worthless. It means you should choose them for their teachers and their honesty, and that you should bring the roots with you.

What Costa Rica does have is its own depth: a Catholic people who walk for days to a small stone image in Cartago; Indigenous peoples for whom cacao is sacred; a peninsula studied by demographers for the long lives of its men; beaches where turtles come ashore by the thousands on certain nights; and an equally real list of dangers, from rip currents to chikungunya. This guide gives you all of it, so that you practise there awake.

It is built on three promises.

First, practical facts are checked and dated. Entry rules, health notices, seasons and safety advice change. Every practical fact in this guide was checked online on **21 October 2026** against the most official source we could reach, listed in the last chapter. Where we could not verify something, we say so, or we left it out.

Second, no invented experiences. No testimonials, no reviews, no "when I was in Nosara" anecdotes, no ranking of any school, retreat or teacher. We name a yoga institution only to report what a published source says about it.

Third, the sacred is treated as sacred. A basilica, an Indigenous ritual and a nesting beach are not decor for a yoga holiday. This guide explains how to be present without taking what is not yours.

> **This guide informs; it does not replace official advice.**
>
> Read your own government's travel advice for Costa Rica, check the entry rules with the Costa Rican authorities or embassy, and see a travel health professional before you leave. In Costa Rica the emergency number for ambulance, fire and police is **911** (UK FCDO; France Diplomatie, read 21 October 2026). The national emergency commission (CNE) answers on +506 2220 2020.

How to use this book

Still choosing dates? Start with Chapters 3 and 5: the two coasts have opposite seasons, and turtles, pilgrimages and holidays shape the calendar. Ticket booked? Chapters 8 to 10 cover arrival, paperwork

and safety. Already there? Chapters 4 and 11 tell you how to behave in churches, communities and protected areas; Chapters 14 and 15 give checklists and phrases.

Chapter 1. Costa Rica in history and belief

Before the Spanish

People have lived in what is now Costa Rica for at least ten thousand years. The country sat between two great cultural worlds. The north-west, including the Nicoya Peninsula, was the southernmost point of Mesoamerican influence when the Spanish arrived in the sixteenth century; the centre and south belonged to the Isthmo-Colombian area, peopled mainly by speakers of Chibchan languages (Wikipedia, "Indigenous peoples of Costa Rica"). In the south, the Diquís culture flourished from about 700 to 1530 CE.

Two places let you see that past with your own eyes. In the Diquís delta, near Palmar Sur, stone spheres, some more than two metres across and weighing up to fifteen tons, were placed by chiefdom settlements; archaeologists still debate their meaning. The "Precolumbian Chiefdom Settlements with Stone Spheres of the Diquís" were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in June 2014 (Wikipedia, "Stone spheres of Costa Rica"), and an open-air museum opened at the Finca 6 site on 7 December 2013 (Wikipedia in Spanish, "Sitio arqueológico Finca 6"). Near Turrialba, the Guayabo National Monument preserves the remains of a settlement inhabited from about 1000 BCE and abandoned around 1400 CE (Wikipedia, "Guayabo National Monument").

The Indigenous peoples today

About 114,000 Indigenous people live in Costa Rica, 2.4 % of the population, belonging to eight peoples. The 1977 Indigenous Law created reserves; there are now 24 Indigenous territories (Wikipedia, "Indigenous peoples of Costa Rica"). The Bribri, the most populous people, live in Talamanca and around Salitre, near the southern Caribbean coast; the Cabécar live higher in the Talamanca range and keep their language and customs most strongly.

For a yogi, one Bribri tradition matters directly. Cacao is sacred: in Bribri belief the cacao tree was once a woman, transformed by the god Sibö, and **only women may prepare the ritual cacao drink** (Wikipedia, "Indigenous peoples of Costa Rica"). Many international retreats now offer a "cacao ceremony". Ask who leads it, what tradition it comes from, and whether any Indigenous community has a say in it. A ceremony invented for visitors may be pleasant; it should not be sold as Indigenous.

A Catholic country

Under the 1949 Constitution, Roman Catholicism is the state religion, while freedom of religion is protected; Costa Rica is the only state in the Americas with a state religion (Wikipedia, "Religion in Costa Rica"). Practice is changing: a 2021 University of Costa Rica poll found 47 % Catholics, 19 % Evangelicals and 27 % with no religion. The great national devotion is to the **Virgen de los Ángeles**, a small dark stone image found, according to the pious tradition, by a young mulatto woman near Cartago on 2 August, probably in 1635. She was declared patron of Costa Rica in 1824 (Wikipedia in Spanish, "Virgen de los Ángeles (Costa Rica)"). Chapter 5 describes the pilgrimage.

Why a yogi should know this

Yoga, in the Indian texts, begins with restraint and attention: the yamas and niyamas come before the posture. Patañjali defines yoga in his second sūtra:

> **योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः**
>
> · yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ · "Yoga is the stilling of the movements of the mind." (Yoga Sūtra 1.2 · our translation)

Practising in another people's land is a good test of that definition. You will be a guest in a Catholic, mestizo, Afro-Caribbean and Indigenous country. The more you know of it, the less your practice will be a performance.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 32 pages.

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