



Equis Classic Rally Central America



Travel Guide Costa Rica

At a glance

Country name: República de Costa Rica

Capital: San José

Land area: 51,100 sq km (Switzerland: 41,293 sq km)

Max. expansion north-south: 465 km, east-west: 259 km

Coastal lengths: Pacific: 1,020 km, Atlantic: 210 km

Highest elevation: Cerro Chirripó Grande at 3,840 m

Longest river: Río Grande de Térraba with 196 km

Population: 5.2 million

Population density: 100 inh./sq km (Switzerland: 217)

Official language: Spanish

Religion: 86% Catholic, 6% Protestant, 8% other

GDP per capita: \$11,879 (2021)

Population growth: 1.6% per year (2021)

Life expectancy: 76 years (2020)

Illiteracy rate: 2.2% (Switzerland: < 1%)

Form of government: Presidential republic

Economy: tourism, textiles, coffee, bananas, meat

Currency: Costa Rican Colon (CRC), unofficial Currency: USD

Time zone: CST (Central Standard Time, MEZ-7)

Digression: Columbus called Costa Rica 'Veragua'





Conduct and etiquette

The manners in Costa Rica are quite stiff. Unlike Spaniards, the Ticos rarely call their counterparts by their first names. Class consciousness is still strong, farmers and workers subordinate themselves to those who appear to be higher in society.

Only friends, relatives and acquaintances use the first form.

Professional titles are also valued and used in the salutation. When it comes to clothing, Costa Ricans are conservative, except on the beach bathing suits are frowned upon.

Population

Ticas and Ticos - this is what Costa Ricans are commonly known as in Latin America. The name became so typical for the Costa Rican nationals because, instead of the classic diminutive form -ito/ -ita of Latin American Spanish, they use the ending -ico/ -ica in many cases. For example, the classic diminutive of chiquito (small) is the word chiquitico. However, Costa Ricans prefer to say chiquitico (little one) instead. Since they use this ending in almost all diminutive forms, they have been given the affectionate nickname of Ticas and Ticos.

According to the last census, almost 5.2 million people live in Costa Rica (2021). The population growth rate was 1.6% in the same year, which is lower compared to previous years (1950: 3.5%). Compared to the total area of the country, the population density of 100 inhabitants seems relatively low, but the distribution of the population is extremely unequal. More than 50% live in the urban agglomeration of the central highlands, which covers only about 10% of the country's area.

Costa Rica is an extremely multicultural society and is often referred to as a country where all cultures are united. Most of the inhabitants are descendants of the Spanish conquerors, the Creoles, but this group can hardly be separated from the Mestizos, who have both Spanish and Indian ancestors. The Caribbean coast is home to a minority of blacks and mulattoes who came to Costa Rica from Jamaica in the 19th century when railroad construction began. Only about 35,000 of the original Indian population, who belong to eight different peoples, are still alive. In 1977, Parliament passed the Indígena Law, which is still valid today, which guarantees the indigenous people 22 reservations in which the land is



to belong exclusively to them. In addition, there is a minority of Asians in Costa Rica, many Latin Americans from other countries and many Europeans. The approximately 250,000 foreigners living in Costa Rica make up about 7.6% of the population.

The Ticos are characterized by their sympathetic nature, courtesy, peacefulness and joy in life.

As a greeting and a general expression of joy and contentment, one hears the national saying:
¡Pura Vida! - The pure life!

Drugs

Unfortunately, Costa Rica was and still is a hub for drugs from South America. The government is vehemently counteracting this. Count on a few years in prison - even for possession of only 'light' drugs! Especially on the southern Caribbean coast you will certainly be confronted with offers to buy drugs. Simply decline the offers with a 'no'.

Shopping

In Costa Rica you will find modern supermarkets in all larger cities, in small towns or in the countryside so-called 'Pulperías', there is only a limited range here, on the other hand the mostly family-run shops do not have regular closing times. Bakeries 'Panaderías' and butchers 'Carnicerías' can be found in small and larger towns, but less so in the countryside, but there are the 'Pulperías'.

Daily and weekly markets 'Mercados' can be found almost everywhere, sometimes covered or in buildings. 'Mini-mercados' are small self-service shops.

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Milliaris Hispanica Communis 17½ in uno Grado.

Scale bar showing measurements in degrees.



Electricity

Mains voltage 110 volts, modern e-razors, notebooks and chargers usually work with this voltage. If in doubt, ask a professional. Same outlets as in the US. It is better to take adapter plugs - for example for European devices - with you from home, even in San José it is not very easy to acquire an 'Adapador de corriente'.

Tip: In many hotels you can find adapters between the socket and the TV (look carefully, they are small and sometimes black), otherwise ask at the reception.

Holidays and festivals

As in all Latino states, festivals and holidays, birthdays and name days are celebrated with great sympathy. Authorities, banks, post offices etc. as well as most shops are closed on official holidays.

Many shops and most companies and offices close for the whole week before Easter and between Christmas and New Year. Practically everything is closed on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, and bus services are largely at a standstill on these days.

Flora and fauna

For nature lovers, Costa Rica is - rightly so - a paradise. Costa Rica includes 12 different vegetation zones: including mangroves and wetlands, rainforests and dry forests, the 'Páramo' at an altitude of over 2,000 meters.

Costa Rica is one of the most species-rich countries on earth, around six percent of all known species inhabit the various habitats. And a tenth of all bird species in the world live in Costa Rica. The country owes this abundance of species to its location at the transition between two continents.

On the coasts and estuaries one finds brackish water areas where mangroves thrive. These plants offer numerous animal species an ideal habitat - even if they don't look particularly attractive. Crocodiles, numerous birds, reptiles and amphibians as well as small mammals can be found here.

Numerous birds, crocodiles, monkeys and many other animals live in the wetlands of Costa Rica. During the rainy season, the wetlands are regularly flooded, while in the dry season they represent huge tidal flats.

The background of the page is a historical map of Central America and the Caribbean region, showing countries like Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent illustration of a tropical scene featuring a waterfall, a boat, and people. In the bottom left corner, there is a scale bar and some text in Dutch: 'Milliaris Germanica Communis 15 in uno Gradu.' and 'Milliaris Hispanica Communis 17 1/2 in uno Gradu.'

Zoques

The most complex ecosystem on earth is the rainforest. Over 50 percent of all species known worldwide live in the rainforest. There are 13 types of rainforests, including the classic, the tropical lowland rainforest. The tropical lowland rainforest consists of several floors. Only a small percentage of the sun, about 10 percent, reaches the jungle floor. For this reason only frugal plants live here, this floor is also called the soil layer.

The next floor, the so-called undergrowth, is inhabited by low and young trees. In the middle layer you will find medium-high trees of five to 20 meters. The upper floor is characterized by gigantic trees that reach 20 to 40 m in height and unfold huge leaf crowns. These form a dense green roof, from which isolated jungle giants, so-called 'overhangs', protrude. These gigantic trees can reach heights of 60 meters and more.

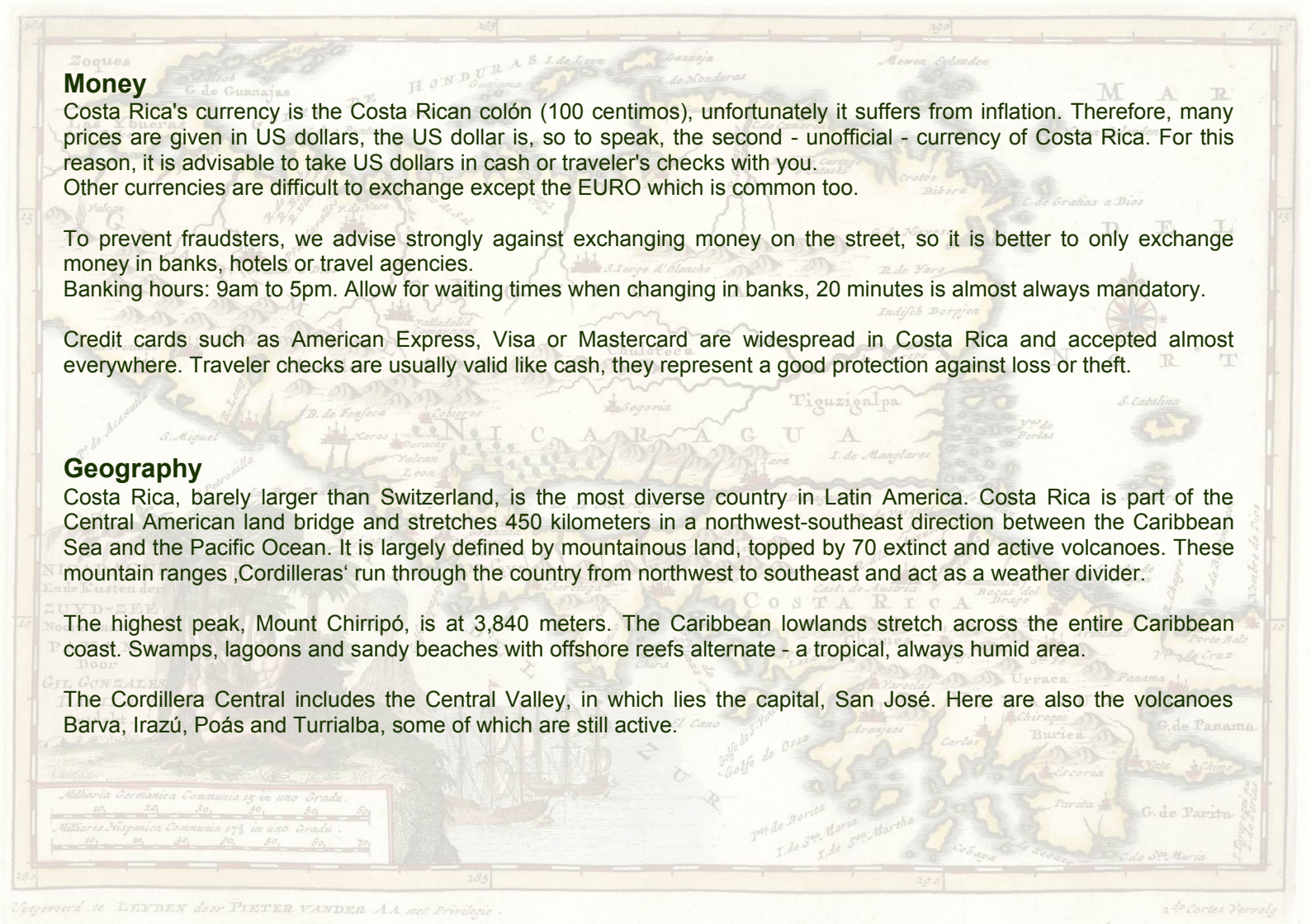
The real lowland rainforest can best be admired in the region around the Golfo Dulce. In addition to the lowland rainforest, there are also mountain and cloud rainforests. Apart from that, there are still dry forests in northern Costa Rica. Here the species population is significantly lower, the trees are usually no higher than 15 meters. Dry forests consist of three tiers, the ground consisting of shrubbery and grass, the lower tier consisting of small trees and shrubs and the upper tier with large, open canopy.

Not only in the national parks of Costa Rica bird lovers get their money's worth. Sloths, coatis, monkeys, caimans and crocodiles, lizards, turtles and snakes pass more or less leisurely as popular photo motifs.

You won't soon forget encounters with these animals: scarlet macaws, fluffy howler, squirrel and capuchin monkeys, cozy sloths and armadillos, archaic-looking helmeted basilisks and black iguanas, fluttering hummingbirds, cute coatis and anteaters, bats, surreal acting poison dart frogs, tapirs, toucans and the legendary bird of the gods quetzal.

With a bit of luck, you might even see an agouti or a rare big cat like the jaguar in front of your camera.

An unbelievable 840 bird species have been counted in Costa Rica so far. It is a melange of North and South American species.



Money

Costa Rica's currency is the Costa Rican colón (100 centimos), unfortunately it suffers from inflation. Therefore, many prices are given in US dollars, the US dollar is, so to speak, the second - unofficial - currency of Costa Rica. For this reason, it is advisable to take US dollars in cash or traveler's checks with you. Other currencies are difficult to exchange except the EURO which is common too.

To prevent fraudsters, we advise strongly against exchanging money on the street, so it is better to only exchange money in banks, hotels or travel agencies.
Banking hours: 9am to 5pm. Allow for waiting times when changing in banks, 20 minutes is almost always mandatory.

Credit cards such as American Express, Visa or Mastercard are widespread in Costa Rica and accepted almost everywhere. Traveler checks are usually valid like cash, they represent a good protection against loss or theft.

Geography

Costa Rica, barely larger than Switzerland, is the most diverse country in Latin America. Costa Rica is part of the Central American land bridge and stretches 450 kilometers in a northwest-southeast direction between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is largely defined by mountainous land, topped by 70 extinct and active volcanoes. These mountain ranges, 'Cordilleras' run through the country from northwest to southeast and act as a weather divider.

The highest peak, Mount Chirripó, is at 3,840 meters. The Caribbean lowlands stretch across the entire Caribbean coast. Swamps, lagoons and sandy beaches with offshore reefs alternate - a tropical, always humid area.

The Cordillera Central includes the Central Valley, in which lies the capital, San José. Here are also the volcanoes Barva, Irazú, Poás and Turrialba, some of which are still active.

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History until 1900

After Christopher Columbus had reached the Caribbean coast of today's Costa Rica on his fourth voyage of discovery in 1502, he called Costa Rica 'Veragua'.

The first Spanish settlement expeditions only started in 1522 from Panama and followed the Pacific coast.

The incursions shook the Indian settlement base without initially leading to systematic colonization, which only began around 1563 with the settlement of the highlands and the associated founding of the first capital, Cartago.

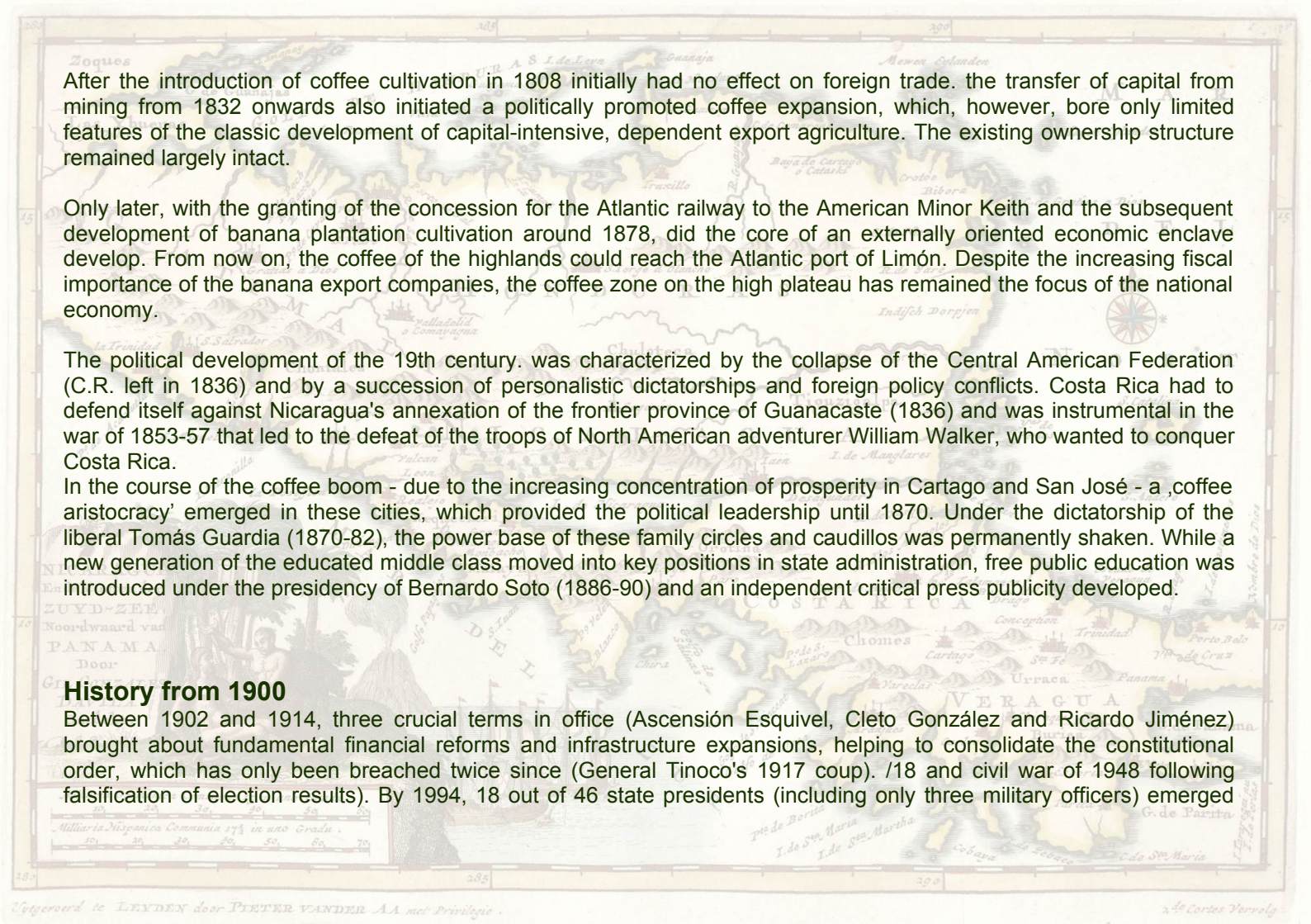
Since, contrary to initial expectations, the country turned out to be extremely poor in raw materials, there were hardly any incentives for increased immigration during the colonial period, so that the population stagnated at around 20,000 for a long time.

While the agricultural base remained subsistence-oriented, the search for an internationally marketable export product led to the expansion of the local cocoa and tobacco cultures. Regular raids by the Caribbean pirate fleet on the plantations in the Atlantic lowlands during the 17th and 18th centuries, however, disrupted market contacts with Europe and prevented an early economic upswing.

Relatively late - just before independence (1821) and around the middle of the 19th century, - the settlement of predominantly rural groups of settlers, mostly from northern Spain, increased.

After independence from Spain, isolated finds of minable gold and silver enabled the formation of a specialized local mining company, supported for a short time (1823-25) by British investment before the economic crisis following the Napoleonic Wars prevented England's capital exports until 1841. The mining 'elite' became the keyword of further development.





After the introduction of coffee cultivation in 1808 initially had no effect on foreign trade. the transfer of capital from mining from 1832 onwards also initiated a politically promoted coffee expansion, which, however, bore only limited features of the classic development of capital-intensive, dependent export agriculture. The existing ownership structure remained largely intact.

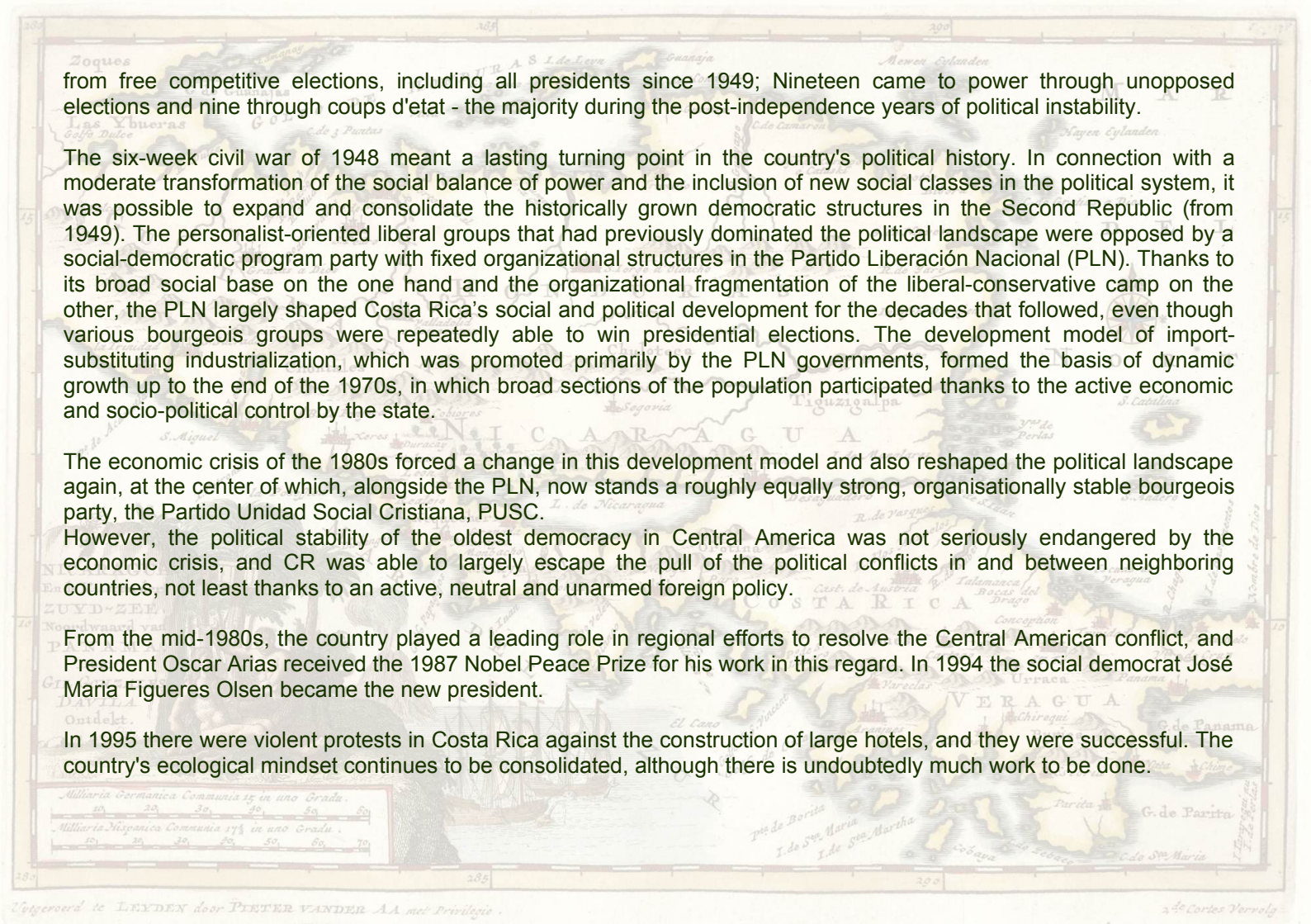
Only later, with the granting of the concession for the Atlantic railway to the American Minor Keith and the subsequent development of banana plantation cultivation around 1878, did the core of an externally oriented economic enclave develop. From now on, the coffee of the highlands could reach the Atlantic port of Limón. Despite the increasing fiscal importance of the banana export companies, the coffee zone on the high plateau has remained the focus of the national economy.

The political development of the 19th century. was characterized by the collapse of the Central American Federation (C.R. left in 1836) and by a succession of personalistic dictatorships and foreign policy conflicts. Costa Rica had to defend itself against Nicaragua's annexation of the frontier province of Guanacaste (1836) and was instrumental in the war of 1853-57 that led to the defeat of the troops of North American adventurer William Walker, who wanted to conquer Costa Rica.

In the course of the coffee boom - due to the increasing concentration of prosperity in Cartago and San José - a 'coffee aristocracy' emerged in these cities, which provided the political leadership until 1870. Under the dictatorship of the liberal Tomás Guardia (1870-82), the power base of these family circles and caudillos was permanently shaken. While a new generation of the educated middle class moved into key positions in state administration, free public education was introduced under the presidency of Bernardo Soto (1886-90) and an independent critical press publicity developed.

History from 1900

Between 1902 and 1914, three crucial terms in office (Ascensión Esquivel, Cleto González and Ricardo Jiménez) brought about fundamental financial reforms and infrastructure expansions, helping to consolidate the constitutional order, which has only been breached twice since (General Tinoco's 1917 coup). /18 and civil war of 1948 following falsification of election results). By 1994, 18 out of 46 state presidents (including only three military officers) emerged



from free competitive elections, including all presidents since 1949; Nineteen came to power through unopposed elections and nine through coups d'etat - the majority during the post-independence years of political instability.

The six-week civil war of 1948 meant a lasting turning point in the country's political history. In connection with a moderate transformation of the social balance of power and the inclusion of new social classes in the political system, it was possible to expand and consolidate the historically grown democratic structures in the Second Republic (from 1949). The personalist-oriented liberal groups that had previously dominated the political landscape were opposed by a social-democratic program party with fixed organizational structures in the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN). Thanks to its broad social base on the one hand and the organizational fragmentation of the liberal-conservative camp on the other, the PLN largely shaped Costa Rica's social and political development for the decades that followed, even though various bourgeois groups were repeatedly able to win presidential elections. The development model of import-substituting industrialization, which was promoted primarily by the PLN governments, formed the basis of dynamic growth up to the end of the 1970s, in which broad sections of the population participated thanks to the active economic and socio-political control by the state.

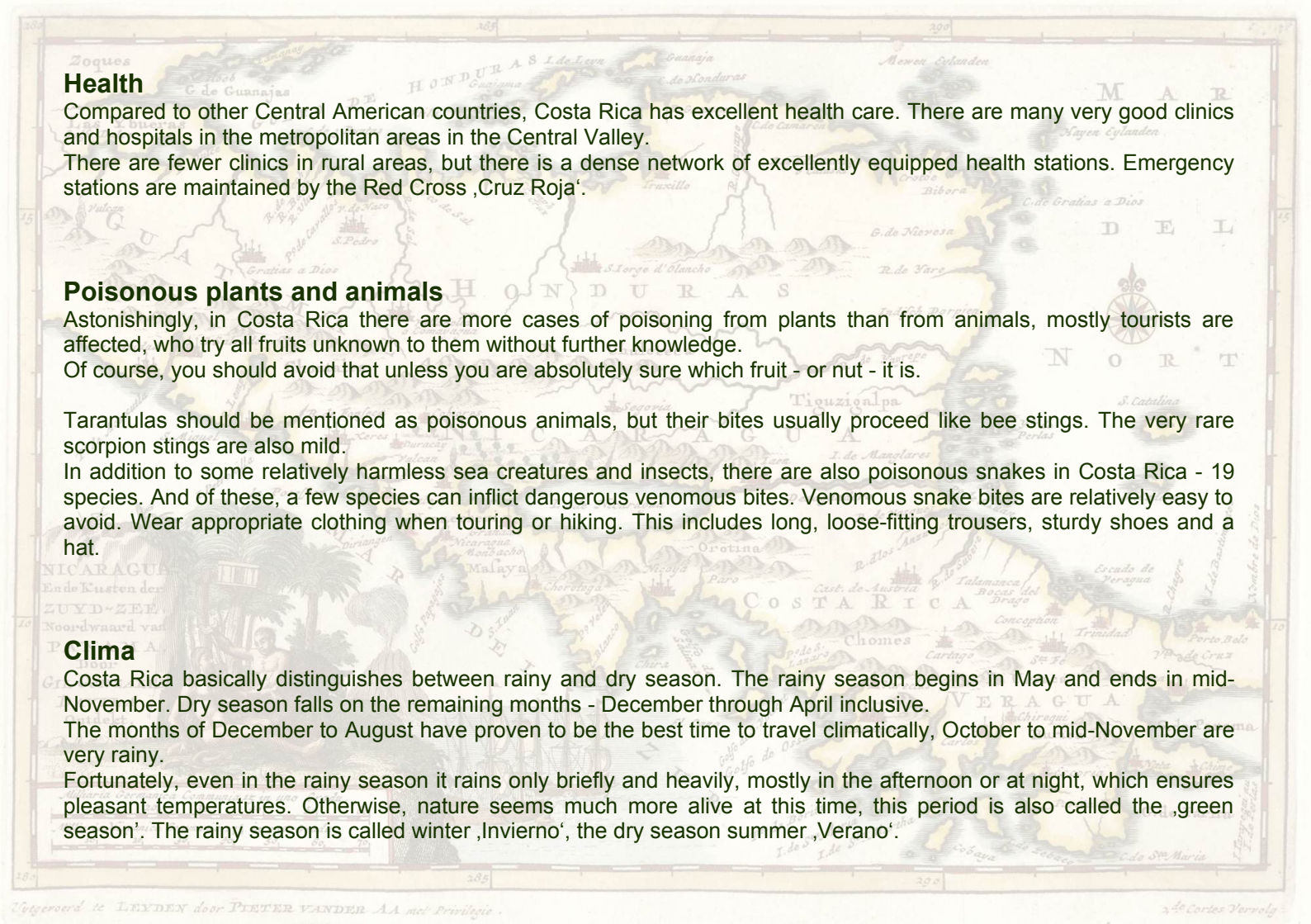
The economic crisis of the 1980s forced a change in this development model and also reshaped the political landscape again, at the center of which, alongside the PLN, now stands a roughly equally strong, organisationally stable bourgeois party, the Partido Unidad Social Cristiana, PUSC.

However, the political stability of the oldest democracy in Central America was not seriously endangered by the economic crisis, and CR was able to largely escape the pull of the political conflicts in and between neighboring countries, not least thanks to an active, neutral and unarmed foreign policy.

From the mid-1980s, the country played a leading role in regional efforts to resolve the Central American conflict, and President Oscar Arias received the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in this regard. In 1994 the social democrat José María Figueres Olsen became the new president.

In 1995 there were violent protests in Costa Rica against the construction of large hotels, and they were successful. The country's ecological mindset continues to be consolidated, although there is undoubtedly much work to be done.





Health

Compared to other Central American countries, Costa Rica has excellent health care. There are many very good clinics and hospitals in the metropolitan areas in the Central Valley.

There are fewer clinics in rural areas, but there is a dense network of excellently equipped health stations. Emergency stations are maintained by the Red Cross 'Cruz Roja'.

Poisonous plants and animals

Astonishingly, in Costa Rica there are more cases of poisoning from plants than from animals, mostly tourists are affected, who try all fruits unknown to them without further knowledge.

Of course, you should avoid that unless you are absolutely sure which fruit - or nut - it is.

Tarantulas should be mentioned as poisonous animals, but their bites usually proceed like bee stings. The very rare scorpion stings are also mild.

In addition to some relatively harmless sea creatures and insects, there are also poisonous snakes in Costa Rica - 19 species. And of these, a few species can inflict dangerous venomous bites. Venomous snake bites are relatively easy to avoid. Wear appropriate clothing when touring or hiking. This includes long, loose-fitting trousers, sturdy shoes and a hat.

Clima

Costa Rica basically distinguishes between rainy and dry season. The rainy season begins in May and ends in mid-November. Dry season falls on the remaining months - December through April inclusive.

The months of December to August have proven to be the best time to travel climatically, October to mid-November are very rainy.

Fortunately, even in the rainy season it rains only briefly and heavily, mostly in the afternoon or at night, which ensures pleasant temperatures. Otherwise, nature seems much more alive at this time, this period is also called the 'green season'. The rainy season is called winter 'Invierno', the dry season summer 'Verano'.



Temperatures are about the same throughout the year. In the highlands, the average temperature is around 22° Celsius, on the coasts it goes up to 32°.

Communication

Communication media such as telephone, WiFi, fax or e-mail are actually everywhere in Costa Rica. In rural areas, however, public telephones are usually only found in hotels, restaurants or shops. Sometimes a yellow sign 'Teléfono público' is posted outside. Major 3G/4G/GSM cellphones work perfectly in Costa Rica, either via roaming or a prepaid card sold everywhere.

The country code for Costa Rica is: +506.

National information: 113, international information: 124, operator: 116.

By the way, there are no area codes in the whole country. Faxes can be sent from ICE (National Electricity Board – Instituto Nacional Costarricense de Electricidad) offices, post offices or hotels.

Arts and culture

For some time, Costa Rica was considered culturally backward. The entire cultural scene has its roots in the peasant tradition of the rural Ticos. This also applies to painting, rural scenes still dominate the canvas. That is changing, more and more artists are thinking and acting more creatively. This applies to painting, fine arts and literature.

The Ticos love to go to the theater. This trend began at the turn of the twentieth century when theater was introduced as a school subject and there was a veritable boom in South America. The small stages in San José present a colorful mix of comedies, pantomimes and avant-garde plays.

The dances in Costa Rica are mostly traditional. The younger generation, however, dances to hotter rhythms and still loves folk music. You can hear mainly merengue, cumbia and salsa. Reggae is very popular on the Caribbean coast.



Mass and weight

As in Central Europe, the metric system applies in Costa Rica with a few exceptions. Here you use kilometers, meters, liters, etc.

Media

Various Spanish-language newspapers are published in Costa Rica. 'La Nación', 'La República', 'La Prensa', 'El Diario' etc.

'Costa Rica Today', 'Central America Weekly' and 'Tico Times' are tourist newspapers, mostly in English. They are available free of charge in hotels. There are also German newspapers in the Librería Francesa in San José.

There is nationwide television reception, and there are also around 125 radio stations - there is sure to be something to suit every taste.

National parks and protected areas

Tourism in Costa Rica has now become the number one economic factor, which is why new areas are constantly being declared protected areas.

Almost a third of Costa Rica's total land area is made up of national parks and protected areas.

Costa Rica boasts over 30 national parks, around 20 biological reserves, and well over 100 other nature reserves. There are also hundreds of private protected areas. These protected areas can be found in all parts of the country, so that not only tropical rain forests, but also mangrove areas, wet, dry, cloud forests and paramo vegetation are protected.

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Politics

Costa Rica is a democratic republic with a strong constitutional system of checks and balance. Executive power is in the hands of a president, who is the center of power in the country. There are also two vice presidents and a 15-member cabinet that includes one of the two vice presidents. The President and the 57 members of the National Assembly are elected for four-year terms by proportional representation. A 1969 constitutional reform limited the presidency and parliamentary membership to one term without direct re-election.

The electoral process is overseen by an independent electoral tribunal as the country's fourth constitutional pillar - three magistrates and six deputies appointed by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court consists of 22 magistrates elected by the National Assembly for renewable eight-year terms. There are also other subordinate courts.

Governors appointed by the president oversee the seven provinces, but their office gives them little power. There are no regional parliaments. Autonomous state institutions enjoy considerable operational independence. This includes the monopolies of telecommunications and electrical energy as well as the nationalized commercial banks and the social security institute.

Costa Rica has no standing army and only maintains police and security forces for internal security.

Costa Rica has long promoted the development of democracy and respect for human rights. Until recently, the country's political system differed significantly from that of its Central American neighbors. It has steadily developed its democratic institutions and a constitution for changes of government.

Various factors have contributed to this trend, including forward-thinking members of government: relative wealth, consistent social classes, educational opportunities that led to a stable middle class, and high social indicators.

The lack of a standing army has prevented military political interventions, while at the same time the saved government spending has been invested in the social sector, especially in education and health.

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Provinces

Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces: San José (354 inhabitants/sq km), Alajuela (83 inhabitants/sq km), Cartago (145 inhabitants/sq km), Puntarenas (35 inhabitants/sq km), Guanacaste (26 inhabitants/ sq km), Heredia (144 inhabitants/sq km) and Limón (28 inhabitants/sq km).

Each province is governed by governors who are appointed by the President.

The provinces are divided into cantons, which in turn are divided into districts. It is interesting that the province of Puntarenas stretches from the southern part of the northern Nicoya peninsula to the south of the country. (See picture).



Travel time

Costa Rica basically distinguishes between rainy and dry season.

The rainy season begins in May and ends in mid-November. Dry season falls on December through April.

The months of December to August have turned out to be the best travel time, October to mid-November are very rainy.

Luckily, even during the rainy season, it only rains for a short time and mostly at night, which ensures pleasant temperatures, but nature is much more lively at this time.

Outside of the high season (December to April) you can travel much cheaper, hotels, car rental companies etc. sometimes grant considerable discounts.

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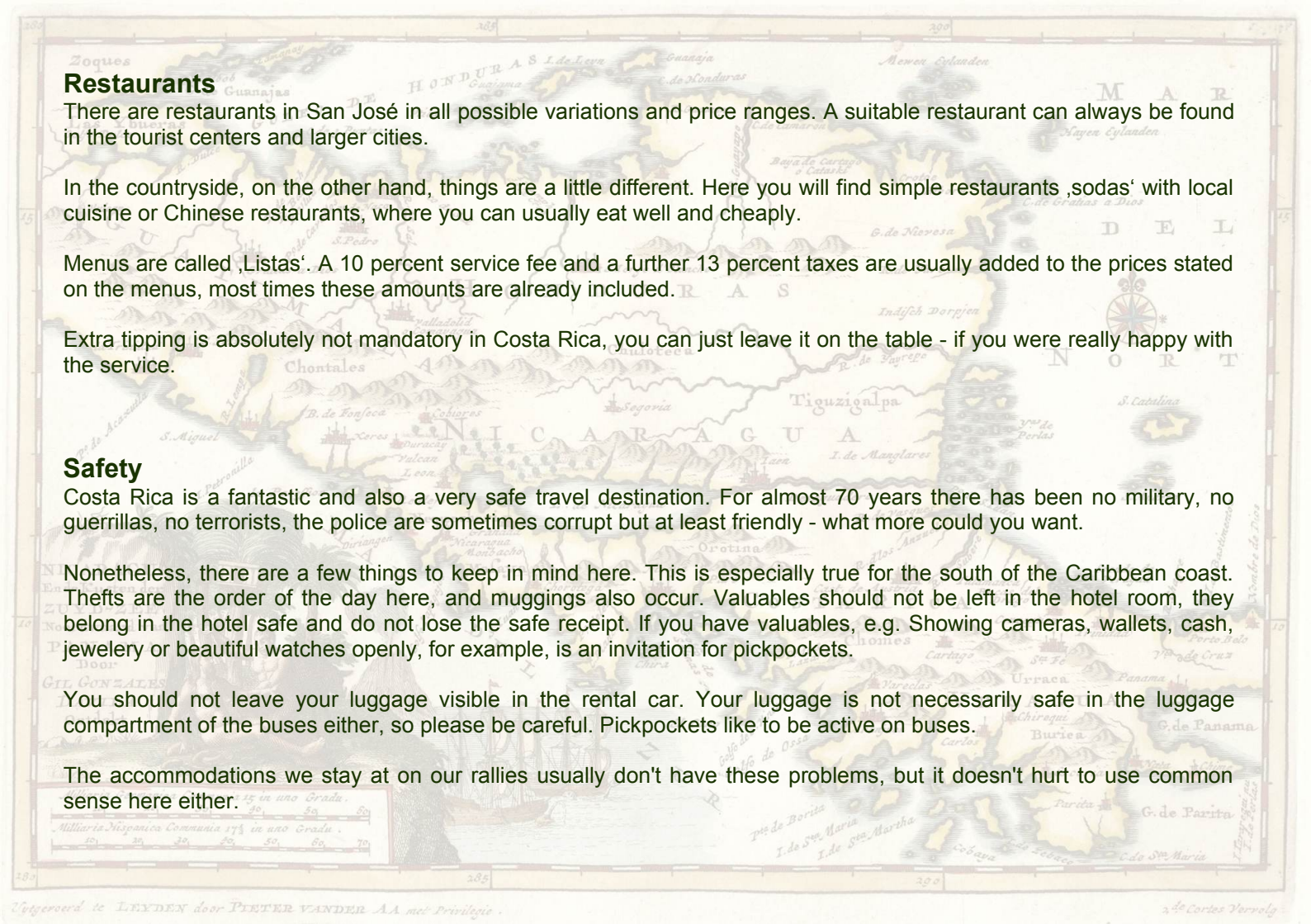
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Restaurants

There are restaurants in San José in all possible variations and price ranges. A suitable restaurant can always be found in the tourist centers and larger cities.

In the countryside, on the other hand, things are a little different. Here you will find simple restaurants, 'sodas' with local cuisine or Chinese restaurants, where you can usually eat well and cheaply.

Menus are called 'Listas'. A 10 percent service fee and a further 13 percent taxes are usually added to the prices stated on the menus, most times these amounts are already included.

Extra tipping is absolutely not mandatory in Costa Rica, you can just leave it on the table - if you were really happy with the service.

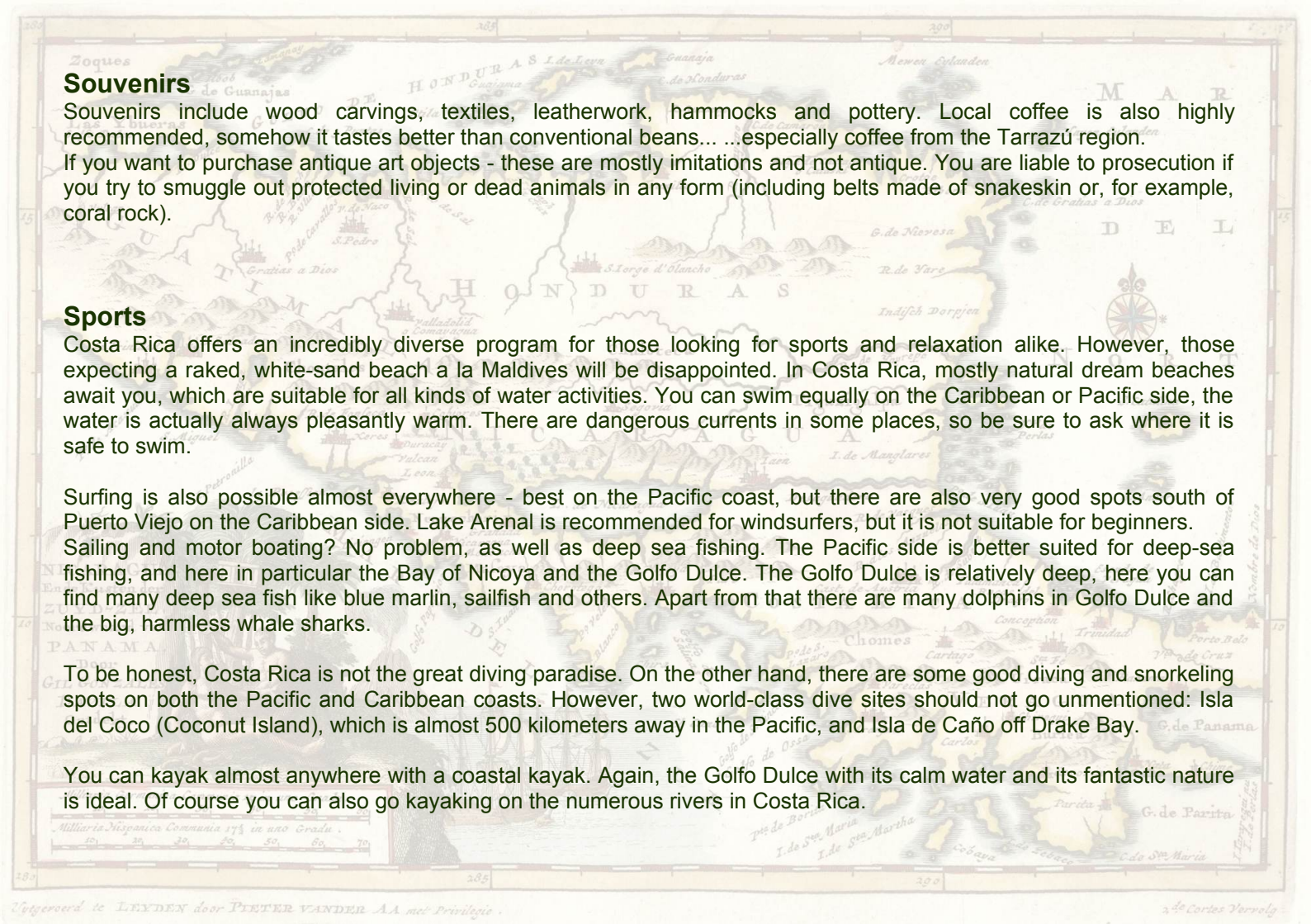
Safety

Costa Rica is a fantastic and also a very safe destination. For almost 70 years there has been no military, no guerrillas, no terrorists, the police are sometimes corrupt but at least friendly - what more could you want.

Nonetheless, there are a few things to keep in mind here. This is especially true for the south of the Caribbean coast. Thefts are the order of the day here, and muggings also occur. Valuables should not be left in the hotel room, they belong in the hotel safe and do not lose the safe receipt. If you have valuables, e.g. Showing cameras, wallets, cash, jewelry or beautiful watches openly, for example, is an invitation for pickpockets.

You should not leave your luggage visible in the rental car. Your luggage is not necessarily safe in the luggage compartment of the buses either, so please be careful. Pickpockets like to be active on buses.

The accommodations we stay at on our rallies usually don't have these problems, but it doesn't hurt to use common sense here either.



Souvenirs

Souvenirs include wood carvings, textiles, leatherwork, hammocks and pottery. Local coffee is also highly recommended, somehow it tastes better than conventional beans... especially coffee from the Tarrazú region.

If you want to purchase antique art objects - these are mostly imitations and not antique. You are liable to prosecution if you try to smuggle out protected living or dead animals in any form (including belts made of snakeskin or, for example, coral rock).

Sports

Costa Rica offers an incredibly diverse program for those looking for sports and relaxation alike. However, those expecting a raked, white-sand beach a la Maldives will be disappointed. In Costa Rica, mostly natural dream beaches await you, which are suitable for all kinds of water activities. You can swim equally on the Caribbean or Pacific side, the water is actually always pleasantly warm. There are dangerous currents in some places, so be sure to ask where it is safe to swim.

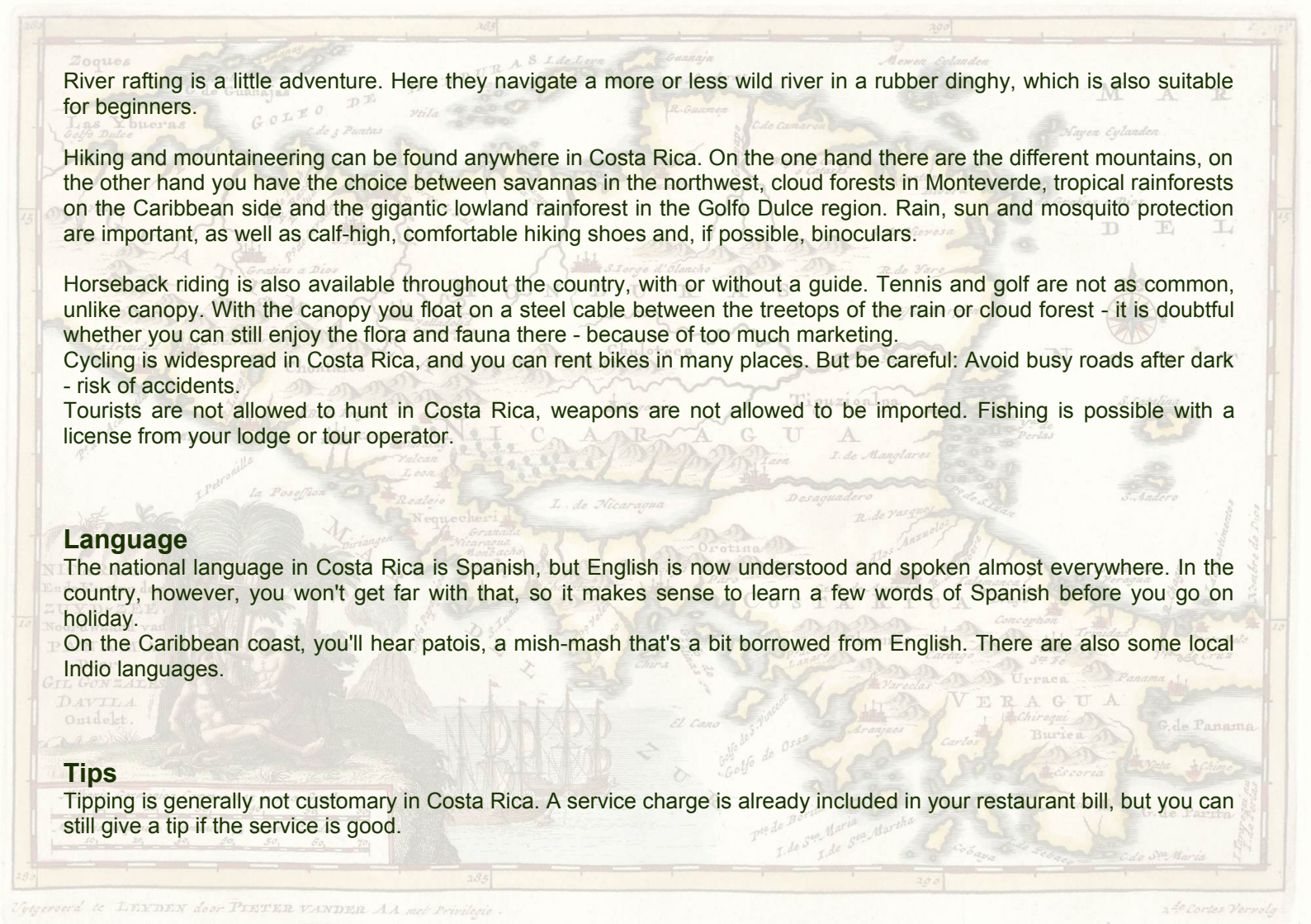
Surfing is also possible almost everywhere - best on the Pacific coast, but there are also very good spots south of Puerto Viejo on the Caribbean side. Lake Arenal is recommended for windsurfers, but it is not suitable for beginners.

Sailing and motor boating? No problem, as well as deep sea fishing. The Pacific side is better suited for deep-sea fishing, and here in particular the Bay of Nicoya and the Golfo Dulce. The Golfo Dulce is relatively deep, here you can find many deep sea fish like blue marlin, sailfish and others. Apart from that there are many dolphins in Golfo Dulce and the big, harmless whale sharks.

To be honest, Costa Rica is not the great diving paradise. On the other hand, there are some good diving and snorkeling spots on both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. However, two world-class dive sites should not go unmentioned: Isla del Coco (Coconut Island), which is almost 500 kilometers away in the Pacific, and Isla de Caño off Drake Bay.

You can kayak almost anywhere with a coastal kayak. Again, the Golfo Dulce with its calm water and its fantastic nature is ideal. Of course you can also go kayaking on the numerous rivers in Costa Rica.

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River rafting is a little adventure. Here they navigate a more or less wild river in a rubber dinghy, which is also suitable for beginners.

Hiking and mountaineering can be found anywhere in Costa Rica. On the one hand there are the different mountains, on the other hand you have the choice between savannas in the northwest, cloud forests in Monteverde, tropical rainforests on the Caribbean side and the gigantic lowland rainforest in the Golfo Dulce region. Rain, sun and mosquito protection are important, as well as calf-high, comfortable hiking shoes and, if possible, binoculars.

Horseback riding is also available throughout the country, with or without a guide. Tennis and golf are not as common, unlike canopy. With the canopy you float on a steel cable between the treetops of the rain or cloud forest - it is doubtful whether you can still enjoy the flora and fauna there - because of too much marketing.

Cycling is widespread in Costa Rica, and you can rent bikes in many places. But be careful: Avoid busy roads after dark - risk of accidents.

Tourists are not allowed to hunt in Costa Rica, weapons are not allowed to be imported. Fishing is possible with a license from your lodge or tour operator.

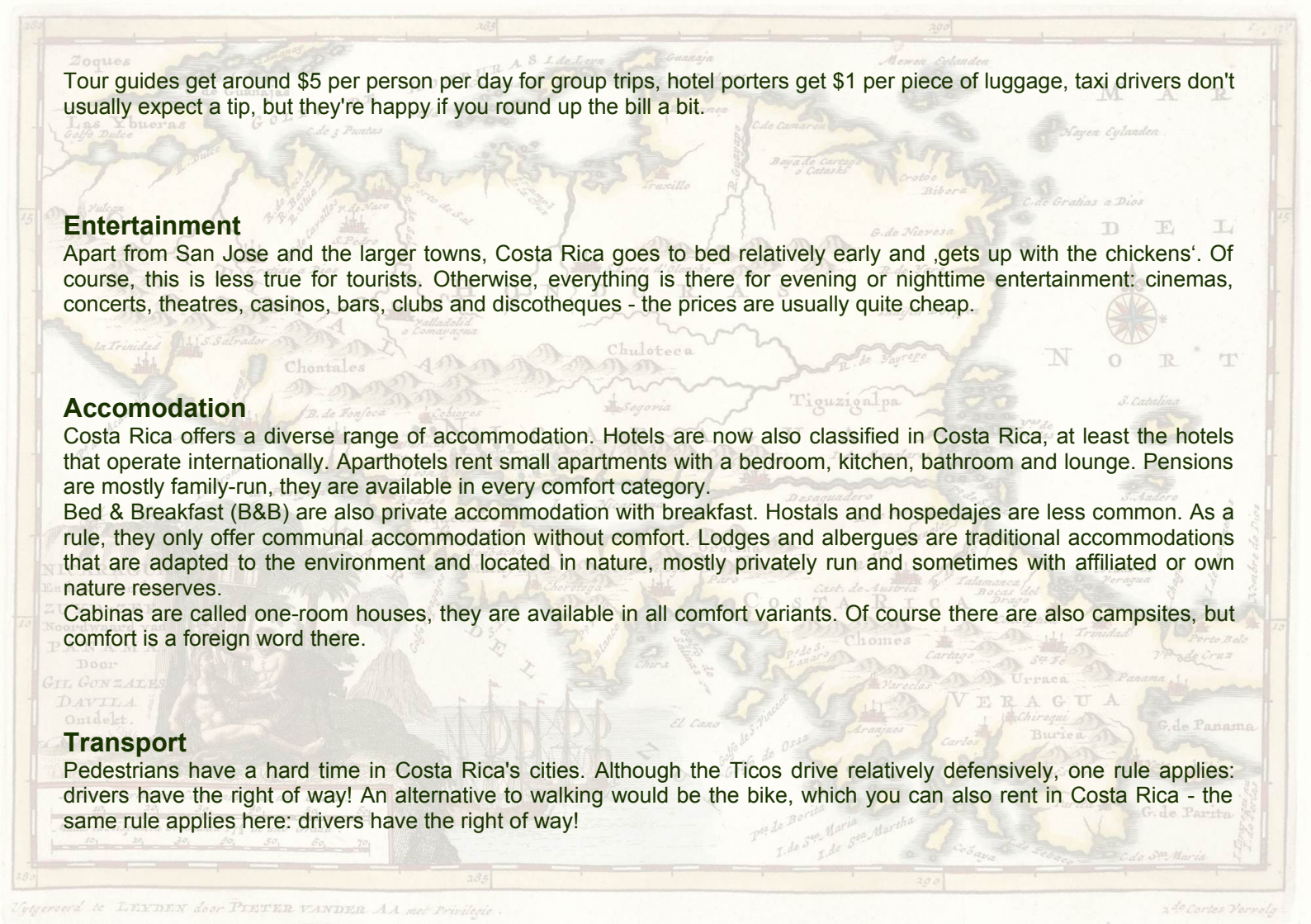
Language

The national language in Costa Rica is Spanish, but English is now understood and spoken almost everywhere. In the country, however, you won't get far with that, so it makes sense to learn a few words of Spanish before you go on holiday.

On the Caribbean coast, you'll hear patois, a mish-mash that's a bit borrowed from English. There are also some local Indio languages.

Tips

Tippling is generally not customary in Costa Rica. A service charge is already included in your restaurant bill, but you can still give a tip if the service is good.



Tour guides get around \$5 per person per day for group trips, hotel porters get \$1 per piece of luggage, taxi drivers don't usually expect a tip, but they're happy if you round up the bill a bit.

Entertainment

Apart from San Jose and the larger towns, Costa Rica goes to bed relatively early and 'gets up with the chickens'. Of course, this is less true for tourists. Otherwise, everything is there for evening or nighttime entertainment: cinemas, concerts, theatres, casinos, bars, clubs and discotheques - the prices are usually quite cheap.

Accommodation

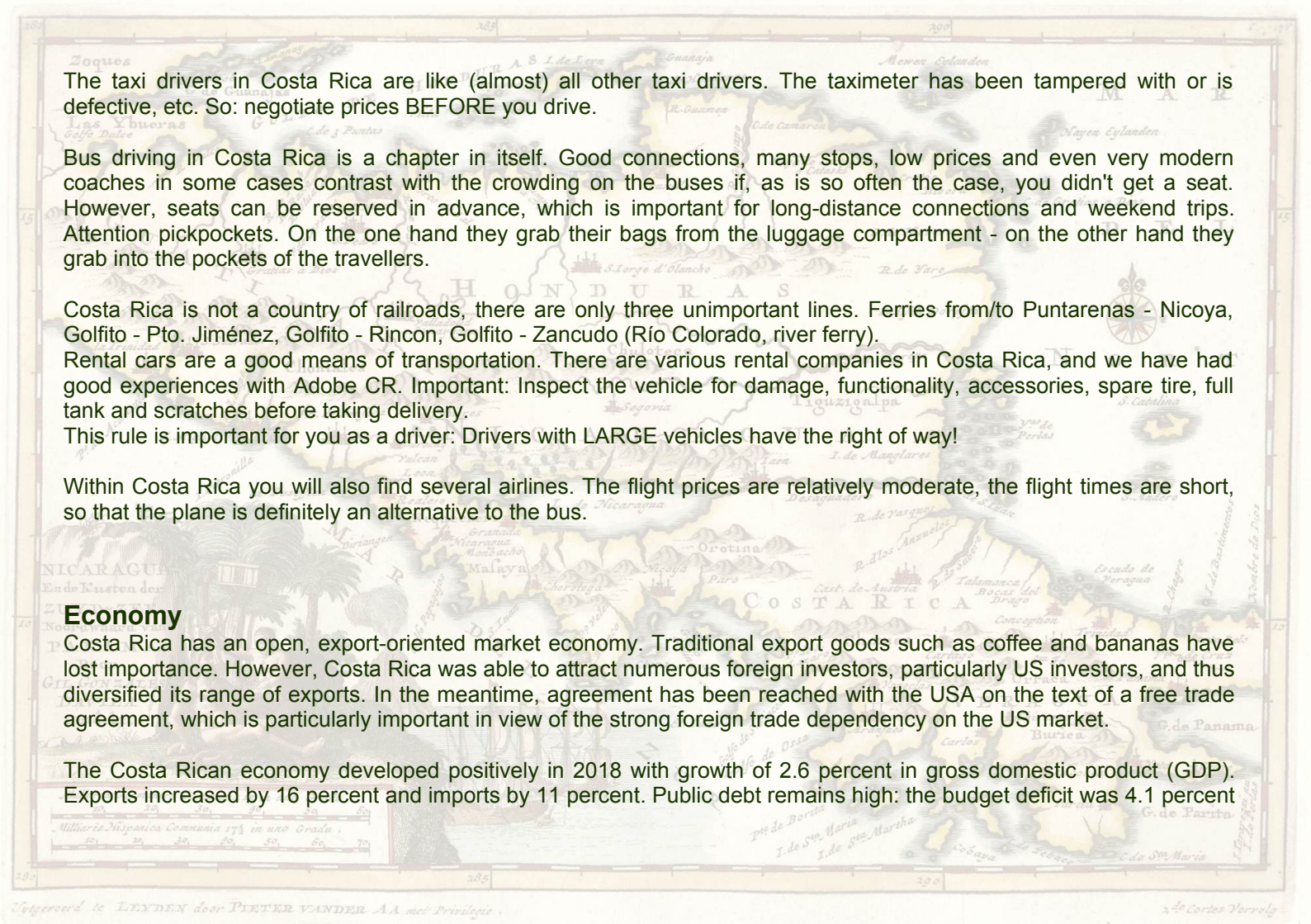
Costa Rica offers a diverse range of accommodation. Hotels are now also classified in Costa Rica, at least the hotels that operate internationally. Aparthotels rent small apartments with a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and lounge. Pensions are mostly family-run, they are available in every comfort category.

Bed & Breakfast (B&B) are also private accommodation with breakfast. Hostals and hospedajes are less common. As a rule, they only offer communal accommodation without comfort. Lodges and albergues are traditional accommodations that are adapted to the environment and located in nature, mostly privately run and sometimes with affiliated or own nature reserves.

Cabinas are called one-room houses, they are available in all comfort variants. Of course there are also campsites, but comfort is a foreign word there.

Transport

Pedestrians have a hard time in Costa Rica's cities. Although the Ticos drive relatively defensively, one rule applies: drivers have the right of way! An alternative to walking would be the bike, which you can also rent in Costa Rica - the same rule applies here: drivers have the right of way!



The taxi drivers in Costa Rica are like (almost) all other taxi drivers. The taximeter has been tampered with or is defective, etc. So: negotiate prices BEFORE you drive.

Bus driving in Costa Rica is a chapter in itself. Good connections, many stops, low prices and even very modern coaches in some cases contrast with the crowding on the buses if, as is so often the case, you didn't get a seat. However, seats can be reserved in advance, which is important for long-distance connections and weekend trips. Attention pickpockets. On the one hand they grab their bags from the luggage compartment - on the other hand they grab into the pockets of the travellers.

Costa Rica is not a country of railroads, there are only three unimportant lines. Ferries from/to Puntarenas - Nicoya, Golfito - Pto. Jiménez, Golfito - Rincon, Golfito - Zancudo (Río Colorado, river ferry).

Rental cars are a good means of transportation. There are various rental companies in Costa Rica, and we have had good experiences with Adobe CR. Important: Inspect the vehicle for damage, functionality, accessories, spare tire, full tank and scratches before taking delivery.

This rule is important for you as a driver: Drivers with LARGE vehicles have the right of way!

Within Costa Rica you will also find several airlines. The flight prices are relatively moderate, the flight times are short, so that the plane is definitely an alternative to the bus.

Economy

Costa Rica has an open, export-oriented market economy. Traditional export goods such as coffee and bananas have lost importance. However, Costa Rica was able to attract numerous foreign investors, particularly US investors, and thus diversified its range of exports. In the meantime, agreement has been reached with the USA on the text of a free trade agreement, which is particularly important in view of the strong foreign trade dependency on the US market.

The Costa Rican economy developed positively in 2018 with growth of 2.6 percent in gross domestic product (GDP). Exports increased by 16 percent and imports by 11 percent. Public debt remains high: the budget deficit was 4.1 percent



in 2017 (compared to 5.7 percent in 2010). A comprehensive tax reform, which is currently being discussed in Parliament, is intended to remedy the situation.

In principle, monetary policy is characterized by stability. Competitiveness is to be secured through daily, marginal devaluations. The inflation rate was 2.2 percent in 2019, this year it is expected to be 6 percent due to Covid and high energy prices.

The structures of the Costa Rican economy have changed dramatically within a few decades: Costa Rica has changed from an agricultural state to a service and industrial state. While agriculture still contributed 23.5 percent to GDP in 1965, the figure is only 5.8 percent in 2017; Services and industry, on the other hand, have shares of 68 and 20 percent, respectively. With a share of 12 percent, agriculture is still of great importance for the labor market.

In recent years, Costa Rica has successfully sought investments from foreign companies, especially in the high-tech sector. Above all, large US and European companies have settled in Costa Rica with considerable investments in free trade zones. Tourism is now the country's most important foreign exchange earner (2017 revenue: USD 2.078 billion). In particular, the so-called 'ecotourism' brings guests to Costa Rica. Around 30 percent of the country's area is under nature protection. Hydropower is particularly important for electricity generation (approx. 90 percent). Oil is fully dependent on imports.

The export of goods and services is an important factor in the Costa Rican economy, but the trade balance is traditionally negative. Traditional agricultural exports (bananas and coffee) are becoming less and less important; they only account for around 12 percent of total exports (2017). The dominant trading partner is the USA with a share of a good 50 percent.

Costa Rica has been a member of the GATT since 1990 and was a founding member of the WTO in 1995. In addition, Costa Rica is a member of the Central American Common Market (Mercado Común Centroamericano), which also includes Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Free trade agreements exist with Chile, Mexico, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Canada and Caricom.

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San José

The capital of Costa Rica, called 'Chepe' by the Ticos, lies at an altitude of around 1,150 meters in the middle of the Meseta Central and is surrounded by high mountains.

About 400,000 people live in San José, including the suburbs 1.7 million people now live here, i.e. around a third of the total population of Costa Rica.

In San José there is a wonderful, pleasant climate: the temperatures are around 22° C all year round, the obligatory rain is limited to short showers. Of course, occasional downpours are also possible, but they usually don't last too long.

Even if you can read in many travel guides that San José is not particularly interesting, this has to be contradicted in the meantime. Without a doubt, there are nicer cities. Nevertheless: the city exudes charm and San José wins through the friendliness of the residents.

San José was only founded in 1737 and therefore has few interesting buildings. Most of the sights can be found around the Plaza de la Cultura, and this is where you should start your sightseeing tour.

The streets of San José are laid out like a checkerboard pattern. Avenidas run in Costa Rica - and of course also in San José - in an east-west direction, calles from north to south. North of Avenida Central are the even Avenidas, south of Avenida Central are the odd Avenidas. It is similar with the Calles, east of Calle Central = odd, west = even. Each block is usually around 100 meters long - so you can assume that you have to walk around 100 meters from intersection to intersection.

Did you know that San Jose was the third city in the world to have electric lights? Or that the government abolished the military in 1948?

La Merced

La Merced (Av. 2-4/C. 10-12) is a neo-Gothic church from 1894 that impresses with its fantastic wooden ceiling and its organ - the largest in Central America. In front of the church are huge Indian granite balls from southern Costa Rica.

Zoques

Mercado Central

THE market in San Jose. The Mercado Central has existed since 1881. Here you can experience Costa Rica and the Ticos from their typical side and this is the best opportunity to taste the typical Tico cuisine.

In the throng of the market you will find artisans, leather makers, jewellers, sodas, meat, fish, fruit and vegetable vendors - and unfortunately - pickpockets too. So watch out for valuables and otherwise enjoy the atmosphere. Mon - Sat, 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Av. Central/C. 6-8.



Mercado de Mayoreo

The Mercado de Mayoreo is a wholesale market that impresses with its extraordinary atmosphere. Not pretty - but worth seeing and managed by chaos.

Delicious sodas as far as the eye can see. Open Mon - Sat, 4:30am - 6:00pm. Avenida 10/Calle 28-32.

Museo de Jade

The Fidel Tristan Museo de Jade displays over 7,000 exhibits, including jewelry, carvings, gold figurines, tools, ceramics and jade work from pre-Columbian eras. Since the museum is on the 11th floor of the Instituto Nacional de Seguros (INS), you also have an excellent view of San Jose from here. Mon - Sat, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Av. 7/C.9 (near Parque Espana).

Museo del Oro

Below the Plaza de la Cultura is the Museo de Oro Pre-Colombiano. On the east side of the square, steps lead down to the Gold Museum. Above all, pre-Columbian gold work by the country's Indians is presented here. The more than 2,000

exhibits include gold jewellery, animal replicas, erotic works of art and much more. Even a chief's breastplate can be seen.

Adjacent to the Gold Museum is the Museo Numismatico, a coin museum exhibiting coins from three centuries. Both museums belong together. Admission, Tue - Sun, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Av. Central/C. 5.

Museo Nacional

The National Museum of Costa Rica is located in the Bellavista Fortress and in this case the name says it all: Bellavista = beautiful view. The fortress stands on a hill overlooking the city. This used to be the headquarters of the (former) Costa Rican army.

The museum shows exhibits on the history of the country, ranging from pre-Hispanic pieces to the present day. Tue-Sun, 9:00am-5:00pm, Admission US\$4, Av. Central-2/C. 17 (at Plaza de Democracia).

Parque Central

After the complete renovation, the Parque Central, the central park, attracts many visitors again. The park is the favorite spot of many Ticos, especially since the pavilion in the park is often used for concerts.

On the eastern edge of the square you will find the Catedral Metropolitano with the blue dome. After a church fell victim to the earthquake of 1821, the cathedral was built in its place 50 years later. Next to the cathedral is the 18th-century Archbishop's Palace, a neoclassical-style building that is not open to the public. Av.2 / C.2.



Zoques

Parque Nacional

San Jose's most popular park is located in western San Jose. Here you can stroll wonderfully and listen to the birds.

The large bronze monument in the park represents Costa Rica's national hero, the drummer Juan Santamaria, the white marble monument, the Monumento Nacional, commemorates the victory over William Walker and his mercenaries in 1856. Av. 1/C. 15-19.

Plaza de la Cultura

The ideal starting point for a stroll through the city is the Plaza de la Cultura. The inconspicuous square is located between Calle 3 and 5 in a pedestrian zone that stretches along Avenida Central for about a kilometer.

Here you will find musicians, jugglers, scarf, glove and umbrella vendors, nice shops, restaurants and sodas - simply put: the Plaza de la Cultura is the (unofficial) heart of the city.

Teatro Melico Salazar

The Teatro Popular Melico Salazar, with its neoclassical facade, was built at the beginning of the 20th century and bears the name of the Costa Rican tenor Melico Salazar. With its 40 mighty Corinthian columns, the marble foyer and the magnificent murals, the theater is the perfect setting for impressive concerts.

Teatro Nacional

Like the Melico Salazar, the Teatro Nacional was built in neoclassical style. This Renaissance building was completed in 1897, modeled on the Paris Opera. After the famous opera diva Adelina Patti ignored Costa Rica during her tour of



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Central America in 1890, the decision was made to build the theatre. It was financed by taxes levied specifically on coffee.

With its marble applications, gold-decorated foyer, Venetian mirrors and murals, it is considered the most beautiful opera house in Central America.

In the building you will also find a suitable Belle Epoque cafe. Mon-Sat, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Admission: US\$4.80, Av. Central-Av.2/C. 3-5.

Miscellaneous & Interesting

Under this heading you will find interesting and worth knowing things - have fun browsing.

Banana Republic

Initially, only those countries that only or mainly exported or produced bananas were referred to as banana republics. The term goes back above all to the Central American countries such as Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua or Panama, whose policies have been determined for decades by the influence of the large fruit exporters United Fruit Company (Chiquita, Del Monte) and the Standard Fruit Company. The economic power of these American companies was far greater than the political power of the governments or even the people of these countries.

Today, banana republic is used pejoratively for countries in which corruption, crime, mafia-like activities, nepotism, personal enrichment at state expense, and dubious elections have been encouraged by significant influence of foreign industrial companies.

The companies only have their corporate interests in mind and look after them without regard to the local population. This also happened in Costa Rica. The United Fruit Company (UFCo) owned huge tracts of land in Costa Rica, the port





in Golfito on the Golfo Dulce was built especially for the UFCo to be able to export the gigantic quantities of bananas. After a banana disease, the UFCo left Costa Rica in the 1980s. The company Chiquita is now handling the banana business in Costa Rica, generating sales of over half a billion US dollars a year.

Casado

The national dish of the Ticos. Casado means 'married' and according to tradition that is what the Tico expects every day when he marries a Tica - Casado... Casado is (usually) found on the menu at lunchtime and it consists - how could it be otherwise - among other things rice and black and/or red beans.

The dish is complemented with plantains, cassava and meat or fish. When it comes to meat, a distinction is made between steak, chicken and pot roast. If you like, you can also order papas fritas, i.e. french fries, scrambled eggs or sour cream.

Ceviche

The national appetizer of the Ticos - spicy marinated fish. Ceviche has - although you can sometimes read it - little in common with sushi & co.

And this is what you need for 8 servings: 1 kg of fish fillet (perch, red snapper, halibut - white fish with firm flesh), juice of 5 limes, a small finely chopped onion, 300 g small diced tomatoes, 1-2 avocados, 2-3 chillies verdes (available in specialist shops or alternatively 2 tablespoons of chili sauce), some coriander, tostadas (flat corn tortillas).

And this is how it's done: Cut the fish (it has to be really fresh) into small pieces of 1 x 10 cm. Marinate the fish with the chillies in the lime juice for about two hours so that the fish can cook in the acid (if necessary, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate). The fish should get a firm consistency after 'cooking'. Add the diced tomatoes, chopped onions and some finely chopped coriander to the fish mixture. Season Ceviche with some chilli and salt. Pour the ceviche (without the juice) over the toasted tostadas just before serving. Serve the avocado cut into thin strips as a side dish.

¡Buen provecho! And if you don't like coriander - just leave it out.

Completely stoned

You will surely come across them, the stone balls of Costa Rica.

They measure between 10 cm and 2.48 m in diameter, the large ones weigh over 20 tons. They originally came from the south of the country, where they can be found in estuaries, in the jungle, in valleys but also on mountains. For example, there are 45 of them on the Diquis plain, on the island of Caño north of Osa, but the balls can also be found in the Piedras Blancas National Park on the Rio Esquinas.

Incidentally, they are made of granite and are indeed circular. It is unusual that there is usually no quarry in the vicinity of the balls. The balls on the Isla del Caño, which weigh more than 20 tons, do not come from there. How did you come here? And why?

The balls are believed to have been made by the Brunucas, a pre-Columbian people who inhabited southern Costa Rica, around 800 AD. It is assumed that they were made and erected for mythical reasons. For years there was a rumor that gold was hidden inside, so many balls were broken open unnecessarily.

Today you can also see some of the spheres in front of houses across the country - for decorative purposes.

Costa Rica ecological

Costa Rica as a country is synonymous with ecology and environmental protection. But is that true? In some travel guides you can read exactly the opposite. There is no doubt that more than a quarter of the country's surface is protected in Costa Rica, but at the same time acres and acres of rainforest are cleared every day for pasture, tens of tons of precious wood are felled legally and illegally, and untreated sewage is discharged into the sea. The list could be continued at will. Nevertheless, in an international comparison, Costa Rica is not that bad.



The most important thing about an upheaval is the mentality of the population - and they tend more and more to the view that Costa Rica's future lies in an intact nature. Many Ticos act accordingly - and you can search a long time for that in other countries. It remains to be hoped that the pro-nature mentality will continue to strengthen and expand.

Isla de Coco - Treasure Island

A small island in the Pacific, around 480 km from Costa Rica, provides one of the most exciting stories about legendary pirate treasures.

In 1684, the English privateer William Dampier gave a 24 square kilometer basalt rock its name, which is still valid today: Cocos Island - so called by the Spaniards because ,coconut palms grow in abundance there.'

The rock rising steeply out of the Pacific, around 4.5 kilometers wide and six kilometers long, has repeatedly inspired the hearts of all treasure hunters on all continents.

It is the most mysterious spot on earth.

The island that is now part of Costa Rica, and which Robert Luis Stevenson inspired in his book *Treasure Island*, was prized by pirates for its remote location and food and freshwater depot, and was home (and still is) to a whole host of treasures.

The existence of hidden treasures on the island has been proven and well known for many years not only to Costa Ricans but to all major coastal cities from Lima to Vancouver.

Nobody dares to guess how much the pirate treasures buried here are worth. It is certainly in the hundreds of millions of US dollars.





Hundreds of expeditions took place in the 20th century alone. Of all the treasures suspected there, the soldiers of fortune and adventurers had their sights set on three in particular.

The first comes from a captain named Edward Davis who captured and sacked the city of Leon, Nicaragua in 1685. It is said of his ship: 'It had loaded the chests with gold in the belly, the precious stones sparkled in the scupper'.

The second was the pirate Dom Pedro Bonito, who roamed the seas under the name of Benito Bonito. His biggest coup came in 1819. Benito Bonito found out about a gold transport that was traveling from Mexico City to Acapulco. On land he ambushed the transport, slaughtered the people and brought the gold to Cocos Island.

Probably the largest, richest and most powerful treasure is the legendary state and church hoard of Lima, which has been considered lost since 1821. Its current (material) value: several hundred million US dollars.

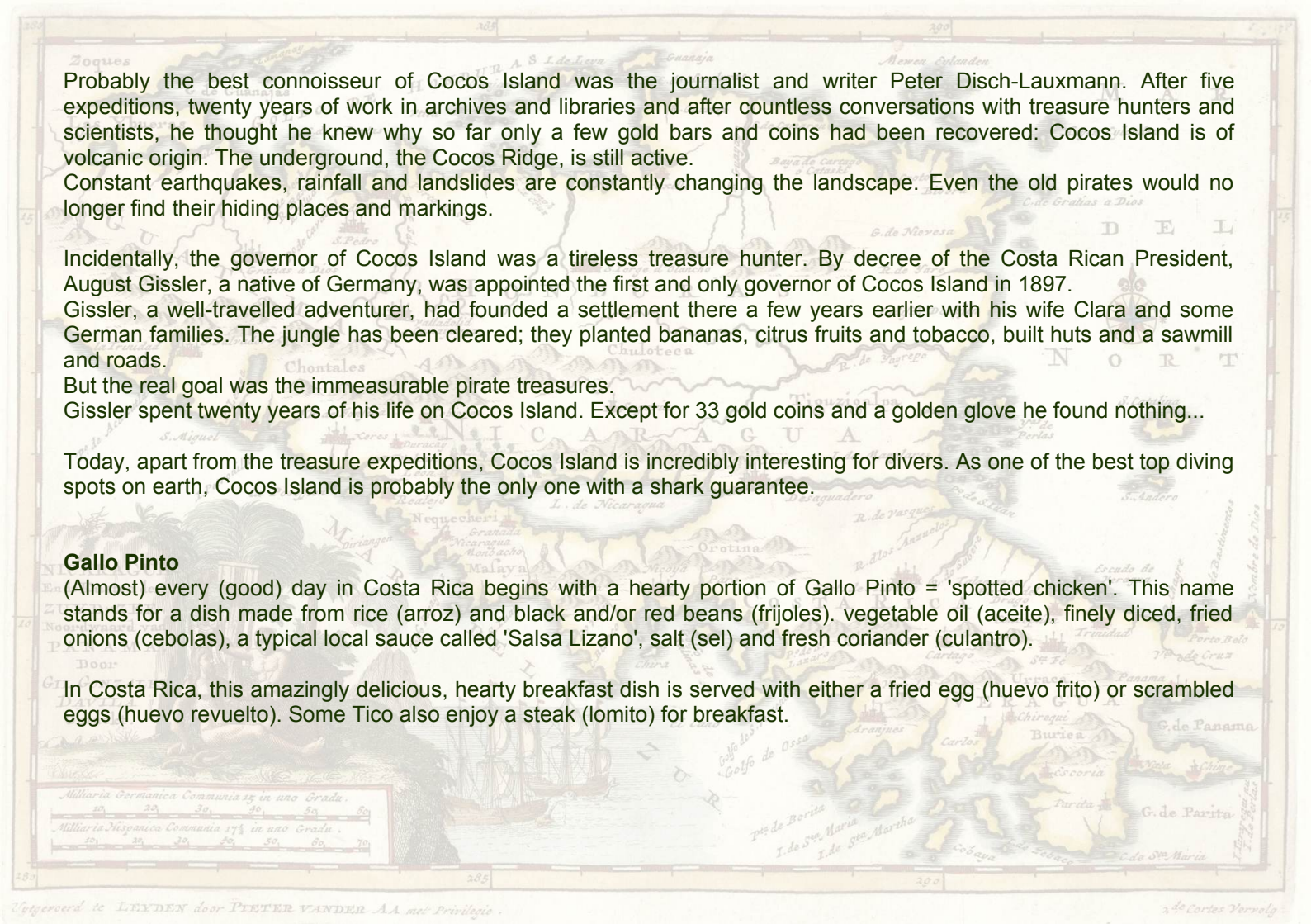
Lima was then one of the richest cities in the world, it was the center of Spanish administration. All the gold and silver of South America was first collected here before it was sent on the long journey to the old continent. But at the beginning of the 19th century, the wars of independence began in South America.

The Spanish viceroy in Lima had only one thought: how could he save himself and the immense treasures? Gold, silver and precious stones were rushed to the fort in the port city of Callao. Coincidentally, the English merchant ship 'Mary Dear' from Bristol was anchored there. It was under the command of the staid Scotsman John Thompson. On August 19, 1921, Admiral Cochrane wrote in his log: 'Today the Spaniards are relieved and strengthened because Lima's riches, worth many millions of pounds, have been brought to safety'.

But he was grossly mistaken 'Mary Dear' with the precious cargo, an escort of Spanish soldiers loyal to the king and some priests on the high seas, the unwelcome guests were murdered and thrown overboard. Barely two weeks later, the 'Mary Dear' anchored in Chatham Bay on Cocos Island. Eleven Boatloads of gold, silver and jewels were hidden in a dug hole between the high and low tide line and camouflaged with rubble and the tide would do the rest. A Spanish warship soon got hold of them and the pirates were taken to Panama and killed there by the strand convicted.

Since then, the treasure has been considered untraceable.

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Probably the best connoisseur of Cocos Island was the journalist and writer Peter Disch-Lauxmann. After five expeditions, twenty years of work in archives and libraries and after countless conversations with treasure hunters and scientists, he thought he knew why so far only a few gold bars and coins had been recovered: Cocos Island is of volcanic origin. The underground, the Cocos Ridge, is still active. Constant earthquakes, rainfall and landslides are constantly changing the landscape. Even the old pirates would no longer find their hiding places and markings.

Incidentally, the governor of Cocos Island was a tireless treasure hunter. By decree of the Costa Rican President, August Gissler, a native of Germany, was appointed the first and only governor of Cocos Island in 1897. Gissler, a well-travelled adventurer, had founded a settlement there a few years earlier with his wife Clara and some German families. The jungle has been cleared; they planted bananas, citrus fruits and tobacco, built huts and a sawmill and roads. But the real goal was the immeasurable pirate treasures. Gissler spent twenty years of his life on Cocos Island. Except for 33 gold coins and a golden glove he found nothing...

Today, apart from the treasure expeditions, Cocos Island is incredibly interesting for divers. As one of the best top diving spots on earth, Cocos Island is probably the only one with a shark guarantee.

Gallo Pinto

(Almost) every (good) day in Costa Rica begins with a hearty portion of Gallo Pinto = 'spotted chicken'. This name stands for a dish made from rice (arroz) and black and/or red beans (frijoles), vegetable oil (aceite), finely diced, fried onions (cebolas), a typical local sauce called 'Salsa Lizano', salt (sel) and fresh coriander (culantro).

In Costa Rica, this amazingly delicious, hearty breakfast dish is served with either a fried egg (huevo frito) or scrambled eggs (huevo revuelto). Some Tico also enjoy a steak (lomito) for breakfast.

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Golden times

When the Diquis, an Indian people living in southwestern Costa Rica, discovered gold nuggets in Osa's rivers, it indirectly sparked a gold rush centuries later. First, however, the Diquis processed the nuggets into jewelry, statues, etc. Then, hundreds of years later, the Spanish conquistadors searched Osa's rivers for the 'disappeared' gold mines of Veragua (Costa Rica was called that at the time) - without any notable success.

A few centuries later there was another gold rush. When the United Fruit Company closed its doors in Golfito, many of the laid-off workers gravitated to the Osa Peninsula to seek their fortunes, prompted by a 20-pound gold nugget found on Osa.

With a few exceptions, only the hotel, restaurant and brothel owners were happy.

In the meantime, gold panning on Osa has been banned, but there are still some adventurers who - even today - mine illegally on Osa.

Grano de Oro

Golden Grain - that's what Costa Ricans call coffee. The Kaffa Province in Ethiopia is believed to be the country of origin of coffee. It was mentioned there as early as the 9th century. Coffee probably came to Arabia from Ethiopia in the 14th century through slave traders. However, it was probably not roasted and drunk there until the middle of the 15th century.

Coffee arrived in Costa Rica in 1797 and proved to be the salvation for the country's then desolate economy. The coffee bean made the previously unknown country known worldwide and brought prosperity to many people. Coffee thrived (and thrives) in the Meseta Central, the central plateau, so well that, after independence from Spain, the Ticos encouraged cultivation, even hiring foreign workers in the process.

The main harvest time in Costa Rica is from December to January, here the coffee beans are still picked by hand.

Today, coffee is the number three source of revenue after bananas and the tourism industry.

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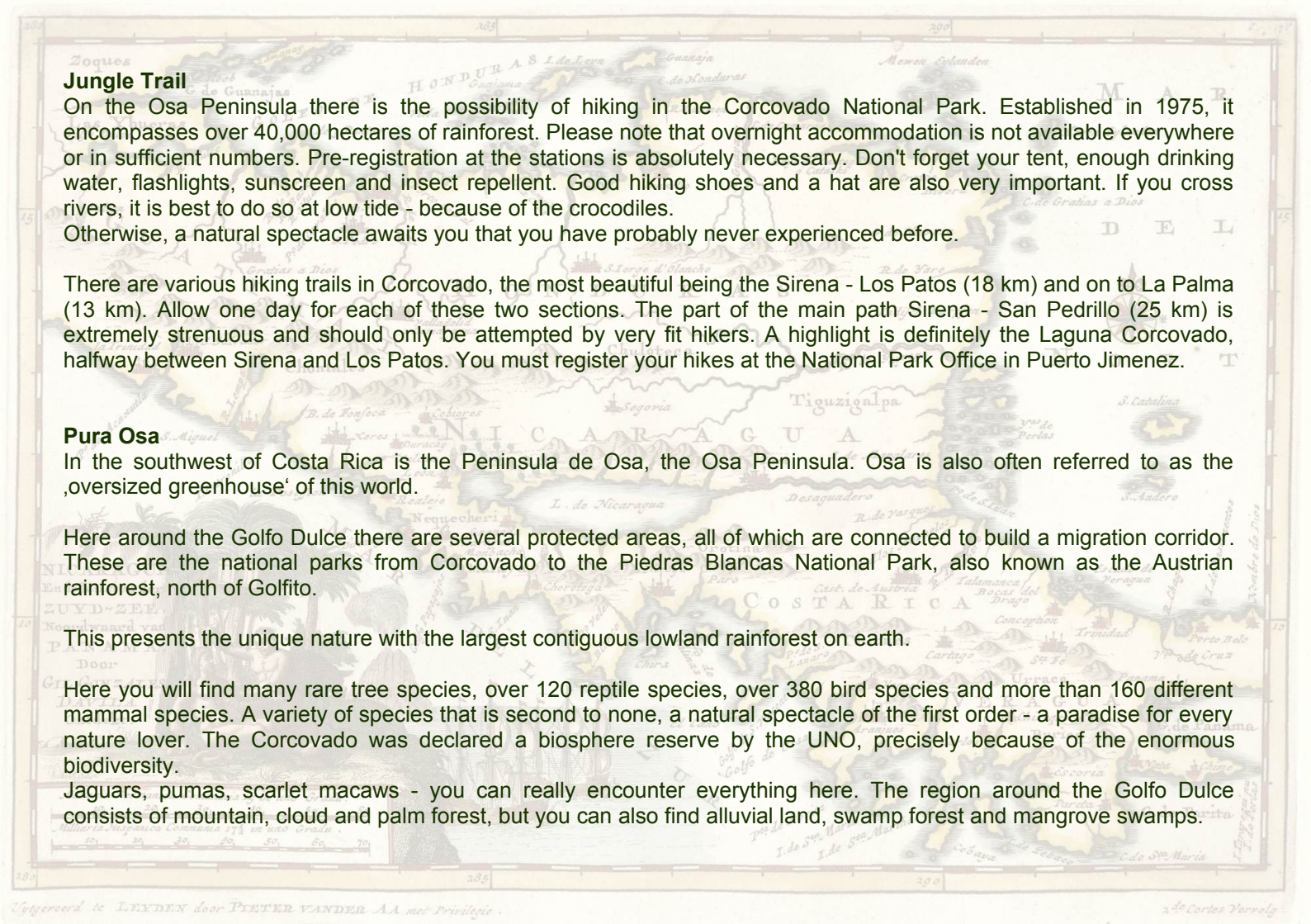
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Jungle Trail

On the Osa Peninsula there is the possibility of hiking in the Corcovado National Park. Established in 1975, it encompasses over 40,000 hectares of rainforest. Please note that overnight accommodation is not available everywhere or in sufficient numbers. Pre-registration at the stations is absolutely necessary. Don't forget your tent, enough drinking water, flashlights, sunscreen and insect repellent. Good hiking shoes and a hat are also very important. If you cross rivers, it is best to do so at low tide - because of the crocodiles.

Otherwise, a natural spectacle awaits you that you have probably never experienced before.

There are various hiking trails in Corcovado, the most beautiful being the Sirena - Los Patos (18 km) and on to La Palma (13 km). Allow one day for each of these two sections. The part of the main path Sirena - San Pedrillo (25 km) is extremely strenuous and should only be attempted by very fit hikers. A highlight is definitely the Laguna Corcovado, halfway between Sirena and Los Patos. You must register your hikes at the National Park Office in Puerto Jimenez.

Pura Osa

In the southwest of Costa Rica is the Peninsula de Osa, the Osa Peninsula. Osa is also often referred to as the 'oversized greenhouse' of this world.

Here around the Golfo Dulce there are several protected areas, all of which are connected to build a migration corridor. These are the national parks from Corcovado to the Piedras Blancas National Park, also known as the Austrian rainforest, north of Golfito.

This presents the unique nature with the largest contiguous lowland rainforest on earth.

Here you will find many rare tree species, over 120 reptile species, over 380 bird species and more than 160 different mammal species. A variety of species that is second to none, a natural spectacle of the first order - a paradise for every nature lover. The Corcovado was declared a biosphere reserve by the UNO, precisely because of the enormous biodiversity.

Jaguars, pumas, scarlet macaws - you can really encounter everything here. The region around the Golfo Dulce consists of mountain, cloud and palm forest, but you can also find alluvial land, swamp forest and mangrove swamps.

Rainforest of the Austrians

The association 'Rainforest of the Austrians' is dedicated to the ransoming of the Esquinas rain forest in the southwest of Costa Rica. Along with the Corcovado, the Bosque Esquinas is the last surviving lowland rainforest on the Pacific coast of Central America and is one of the most species-rich forests on earth. Over 180 different tree species could be identified on one hectare (for comparison: in the whole of Central Europe: 50 species!).

The purchased plots of land will be brought into the 'Piedras Blancas' national park, which is constantly growing - a total of more than 90 km² of rainforest has already been purchased and placed under protection, about a third of which with donations from Austria.

These receive the symbolic name 'Rainforest of the Austrians'. The project goes back to the private initiative of the Austrian Prof. Michael Schnitzler, who started the project in 1991.

The photo shows the Bosque Esquinas, destination: EQUIS II.



Rodeo & Corrida

In the northwest of the country, in Guanacaste, you see them every day, the Sabaneros, the cowboys of Costa Rica. And you can see them on weekends too - at the rodeos. Here the Sabaneros not only defeat horses, but also wild bulls - at least for a few seconds...

At the Corridas, the Sabaneros show what they're made of: horse and bull rodeo, lasso art and much more.

Speaking of which, Spanish-style bull-killing corridas do not exist in Costa Rica. Here the bulls are brought down with the lasso. The winner is whoever can do it the fastest. Spectators are also allowed to take part - nevertheless, a not entirely harmless pleasure.



Tica & Tico

There are a few anecdotes about the origin of the words 'Tica' and 'Tico'. One is that the ruling upper class in Costa Rica called 'Hermanticos' = 'little brothers' and 'Tica' or 'Tico' emerged from this.

Another idea is that the diminutive in Spanish replaces the 'ita' or 'ito' in place of the last 'a' or 'o'. 'Chica' (girl) becomes (again distorted) 'Chicitita' (little, sweet girl).

In contrast to Spaniards, however, the Costa Ricans mostly use 'ica' and 'ico' - one could also get the idea that 'Tica' and 'Tico' came from there.

Native people

In pre-Columbian times, three peoples lived in Costa Rica. The Mexican-migrant Chorotegas populated northern Costa Rica, the Amazonian-migrant Huetares populated the central plateau and coast of the Caribbean, and the Chilean Bruncas lived on the southern Pacific coast of Costa Rica and adjacent Panama.

In the course of the conquista, most of the tribes of the peoples were completely wiped out, illnesses did the rest. Today around 35,000 of their descendants still live on Indian reservations, where some of them still maintain their traditional customs and traditions. Some of the reserves are open to tourists, others are not.

Wild Wild West

As well as rodeo and corrida, there are other associations with the wild west. The cowboy and grazing province of Guanacaste abounds—but you'll find them all over Costa Rica—more than 3.5 million cattle.

Costa Rica exports more than 100,000 tons of beef per year. Suitcases, bags, belts, trousers, boots, etc. are made from the leather of the cows. But there are also downsides. Due to the expansive keeping of cattle, forests are cleared, mostly illegally, for new pastures, and the damage to Costa Rica's environment is foreseeable.

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