



# Península de Osa & Golfo Dulce

## Includes »

To Corcovado via Puerto Jiménez .....	362
Puerto Jiménez .....	364
To Corcovado via Bahía Drake .....	374
Bahía Drake .....	375
Reserva Biológica Isla del Caño .....	382
Parque Nacional Corcovado .....	382
Golfo Dulce .....	388
Pavones .....	393
Parque Nacional Isla del Cocos .....	395

## Why Go?

Sure, it's difficult to get here, but the remote southwestern corner of the country is regarded as Costa Rica's most picturesque, pristine and exciting turf. Although much of the rainforest in Costa Rica is protected, no other region can offer the extent of wildlife found in Osa. In Corcovado, it's possible to see all four native species of monkey in the canopy overhead, while otherwise rare animals such as Baird's tapir can be spotted regularly. Indeed, the Osa peninsula is striking evidence that the beauty of the rainforest is worth saving.

Beyond Corcovado, the Osa peninsula captivates travelers with abandoned wilderness beaches, world-class surf and opportunities for rugged exploration. In a country where adventure is all too often downgraded and packaged for tourist consumption, Osa is the real deal. Simply put, it's a place for travelers with youthful hearts, intrepid spirits and a yearning for something truly wild.

## Best Places to Eat

- » Rancho Grande (p390)
- » Jade Luna (p368)
- » Soda Veleria (p368)
- » Pizzamail.it (p368)
- » Rancho Grande (p390)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Cabinas Murillo (p378)
- » Tiskita Jungle Lodge (p394)
- » Yoga Farm (p394)
- » Esquinas Rainforest Lodge (p391)
- » Lapa Ríos (p370)

## When to Go

Although, as a rainforest, it's always wet here, it absolutely pours between October and December. Storms can make the roads impassable and the travel tough. This can be a bit maddening, particularly if you are traveling overland to Corcovado. If you come during this time, bring lots of dry socks! The upside to the rainy season? It's also the best time of year for swells, making for killer surfing. If you're traveling here independently a 4WD is an absolute necessity at any season, as river crossings are inevitable.

## History

While the Guaymí were the earliest inhabitants of the Osa, the vast majority of the peninsula was never populated or developed by Ticos (Costa Ricans). In fact, because of the remoteness of the region, commercial logging was never a threat until the early 1960s.

Although this tumultuous decade saw the destruction of much of Costa Rica's remaining primary forests, Osa was largely spared. By 1975, however, international companies were greedily eyeing the peninsula's timber and gold. Fortunately, these ambitions were halted when researchers petitioned President Daniel Oduber to establish a national park.

In recent years the peninsula has attracted the attention of wealthy foreigners, who have snatched up some prime real estate, but there's hope that development will be more sustainable in this part of the country, particularly since there is a vested interest in keeping the peninsula green.

## Climate

Though both are wet, the Osa peninsula has a rainy season and a dry season. During the rainy season (mid-April to mid-December) the amount of precipitation is astounding, with most months boasting more than 500mm. Even in the dry season, better described as the 'less rainy season,' expect a good downfall now and again.

## Parks & Reserves

As the country's premier ecotourism destination, the Península de Osa has a plethora of parks, reserves and wildlife refuges. There seems to be a park around every corner – the following list is only the beginning.

» **Humedal Nacional Terraba-Siepe** (p374) Approximately 330 sq km of protected mangrove wetlands.

» **Parque Nacional Corcovado** (p382) Osa's shining crown jewel, and one of Costa Rica's last true wilderness areas.

» **Parque Nacional Isla del Cocos** (p395) Visually stunning, utterly pristine and – by far – the country's most remote and difficult spot to access.

» **Parque Nacional Piedras Blancas** (p391) One of the last remaining stretches of lowland rainforest in the country.

» **Reserva Biológica Isla del Caño** (p382) A tiny marine and terrestrial park in Bahía Drake that is a popular destination for snorkelers, divers and biologists.

» **Reserva Forestal Golfo Dulce** (p362)

On the northern shore of Golfo Dulce, this is an important biological corridor for migrating wildlife.

## Dangers & Annoyances

The greatest annoyance in Osa is the difficult environment, particularly in Parque Nacional Corcovado. Trails are generally well marked but it can be difficult going at times, especially if you're not confident at navigating trails. Also, crossing the rivers that through the park create their own hazards, especially in the rainy season. Medical help is very far away – if you get lost out here, you have a serious problem.

If you're unsure about facing these challenges, it's recommended that you explore Corcovado either as part of an organized tour or with the help of a local guide. Hiring a knowledgeable guide will also provide up-to-date information on potential hazards, and it provides safety through numbers.

By and large, animals are not much of a problem in Corcovado. Sure, areas of Corcovado are also prime territory for the deadly fer-de-lance snake, but the chance of getting bitten is remote. Sure, there are big cats, but they are virtually invisible. According to guides, the most dangerous animal encounters are with grunting packs of peccaries – hairy, half-sized, wild pigs. One or two of them will scamper away, but when they travel in large packs (sometimes up to 200 large!) they can be aggressive and dangerous. The guides' advice in the unlikely event of an encounter is to climb a tree.

Although they don't carry Lyme disease, ticks are everywhere in Corcovado. In reality, they're nothing more than a nuisance, though you'd be wise to bring a good pair of tweezers. If you're not traveling with a buddy, a pocket mirror will also help, as these little buggers have a habit of turning up in some rather uncomfortable places.

## **i** Getting There & Around

Getting to Osa demands one of two things: lots of patience or a chartered flight. Given the reasonable cost of flights, the best option for exploring the peninsula is to fly in if your time is limited. If you choose to drive, you'll need 4WD, a spare tire, a whole day to get here from San Jose and steely nerves: roads in Osa are extremely poor, as most of the peninsula is still off the grid. Getting in and out via public transportation is possible, but slow going.