



San José

POP GREATER METRO AREA: OVER 1.5 MILLION, CITY: 291,100 / 1170M

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Best Places to Eat

- » Park Café (p72)
- » La Esquina de Buenos Aires (p70)
- » Restaurante Tin-Jo (p70)
- » Kalú Café & Food Shop (p70)
- » Restaurant Whapin (p87)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Grano de Oro (p69)
- » Hotel Aranjuez (p66)
- » Mansión del Parque Bolívar Hotel (p67)
- » Hotel Posada del Museo (p66)
- » Hostel Pangea (p64)

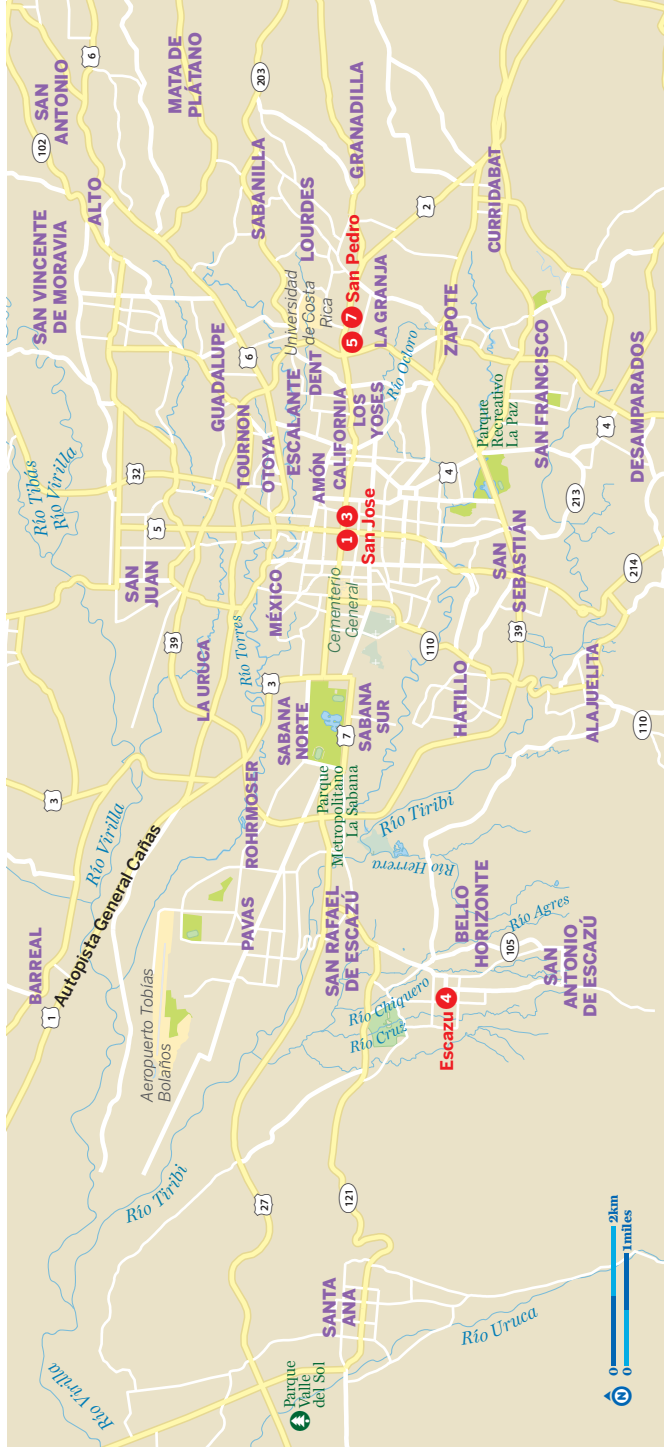
Why Go?

San José is not a pretty city, what with the unremarkable concrete structures, clogged pedestrian arcades and fast-food monstrosities dominating its cityscape. And how delightful can a city really be when you're constantly dodging homicidal drivers, evading pickpockets and trying to tune out the cacophony of honking horns and ear-splitting reggaetón?

But once you get the hang of it, Chepe – as San José is affectionately known – quickly reveals its charms. Take your time poking around the more historic neighborhoods, where colonial mansions have been converted into contemporary art galleries, refined international restaurants and boutique hotels. Colorfully arresting murals and hipster buskers pop up on the most unexpected corners. And in its museums of gold and jade and national history lie all the layers of indigenous heritage, colonial past and great minds that made Costa Rica the environmental champion and military-free country we love today.

When to Go

Rainy season usually lasts from mid-April through December. The city's climate is considerably cooler than on the coasts, especially at night; daytime temps generally vary between 21°C to 27°C (70°F to 80°F). The best time to visit is around the Christmas holidays, when the Ticos' festive cheer reaches its height, with the Festival de Luz and Las Fiestas de Zapote being unmissable highlights. Otherwise, any season is good for exploring the capital's cultural attractions.



San José Highlights

- 1** Admire Costa Rica's artistic traditions past and present at the **Museo de Oro Precolombino y Numismática** (p54) and **Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo** (p58)
- 2** Get your groove on until the break of dawn at one of San José's thumping **nightclubs**
- 3** Take in a classical music performance after lingering amid the beaux-arts interiors of the **Teatro Nacional** (p78)
- 4** Poke around the **farmers markets** of Escazú, picking up locally grown and gourmet treats
- 5** Groove to live bands in San Pedro at **Jazz Café** (p88), San José's most storied music venue
- 6** Wander the quiet streets from **Barrio Amón** to **Los Yoses**
- 7** Bar-crawl alongside hard-partying Tico students on **Calle La Amargura** in San Pedro
- 8** Get a taste of Costa Rica's most sophisticated and diverse **culinary scene**