



Central Pacific Coast

Includes ➔

Puntarenas	351
Parque Nacional Carara	354
Jacó	358
Quepos.....	370
Manuel Antonio Village	381
Parque Nacional Manuel Antonio	383
Dominical.....	390
Uvita	396
Ojochal.....	400
Parque Nacional Isla del Coco	402

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Citrus (p402)
- ➔ Gabriella's (p374)
- ➔ Graffiti (p363)
- ➔ Sabor Español (p398)

Best Undiscovered Beaches

- ➔ Matapalo (p387)
- ➔ Playa Esterillos (p366)
- ➔ Playa Hermosa (p365)
- ➔ Playa Palo Seco (p367)

Why Go?

Stretching from the rough-and-ready port of Puntarenas to the tiny town of Uvita, the central Pacific coast is home to both wet and dry tropical rainforests, sun-drenched sandy beaches and a healthy dose of wildlife. On shore, national parks protect endangered squirrel monkeys and scarlet macaws, while offshore waters are home to migrating whales and pods of dolphins.

With so much biodiversity packed into a small geographic area, it's no wonder the coastal region is often thought of as Costa Rica in miniature. Given its close proximity to San José and the Central Valley and highlands, and its well-developed system of paved roads, this part of the country is a favorite weekend getaway for domestic and international travelers.

While threats of unregulated growth and environmental damage are real, it's also important to see the bigger picture, namely the stunning nature that first put the central Pacific coast on the map.

When to Go

- ➔ Rains fall heavily between April and November – the best time to hit the waves in Playa Hermosa and Jacó.
- ➔ Whale-watching in Uvita is at its best between December and March and July till November.
- ➔ Festival fans will want to visit from around mid-January to late February, when music and art gatherings light up Jacó and Uvita.



Central Pacific Coast Highlights

1 Watching troops of monkeys, slow-moving sloths and gliding brown pelicans at **Parque Nacional Manuel Antonio** (p383).

2 Surfing the beach breaks of **Jacó** (p358), **Playa Hermosa** (p365) and **Dominical** (p390) – or learning how.

3 Sampling some of the coast's most sophisticated cuisine in **Ojochal** (p400).

4 Scanning the horizon for pods of breaching humpback whales from the deserted