

Costa Rica

Geography

Location: Middle America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama

Map references: Central America and the Caribbean

Area:

total area: 51,100 sq km

land area: 50,660 sq km

comparative area: slightly smaller than West Virginia

note: includes Isla del Coco

Land boundaries: total 639 km, Nicaragua 309 km, Panama 330 km

Coastline: 1,290 km

Maritime claims:

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: tropical; dry season (December to April); rainy season (May to November)

Terrain: coastal plains separated by rugged mountains

Natural resources: hydropower potential

Land use:

arable land: 6%

permanent crops: 7%

meadows and pastures: 45%

forest and woodland: 34%

other: 8%

Irrigated land: 1,180 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: deforestation, largely a result of the clearing of land for cattle ranching; soil erosion

natural hazards: occasional earthquakes, hurricanes along Atlantic coast; frequent flooding of lowlands at onset of rainy season; active volcanoes

People

Population: 3,419,114 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 35% (female 585,976; male 617,456)

15-64 years: 60% (female 1,013,491; male 1,036,195)

65 years and over: 5% (female 88,050; male 77,946) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.24% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 24.88 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 3.47 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 1.02 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 10.3 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 78.11 years

male: 76.21 years

female: 80.1 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 3.01 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Costa Rican(s)

adjective: Costa Rican

Ethnic divisions: white (including mestizo) 96%, black 2%, Indian 1%, Chinese 1%

Religions: Roman Catholic 95%

Languages: Spanish (official), English; spoken around Puerto Limon

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1984)

total population: 93%

male: 93%

female: 93%

Labor force: 868,300

by occupation: industry and commerce 35.1%, government and services 33%, agriculture 27%, other 4.9% (1985 est.)

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Costa Rica

conventional short form: Costa Rica

local long form: Republica de Costa Rica

local short form: Costa Rica

Type: democratic republic

Capital: San Jose

Administrative divisions: 7 provinces (provincias, singular - provincia); Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Limon, Puntarenas, San Jose

Independence: 15 September 1821 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 15 September (1821)

Constitution: 9 November 1949

Legal system: based on Spanish civil law system; judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Flag: five horizontal bands of blue (top), white, red (double width), white, and blue, with the coat of arms in a white disk on the hoist side of the red band

Economy

Overview: Costa Rica's basically stable and progressive economy depends especially on tourism and export of bananas, coffee, and other agricultural products.

Industries: food processing, textiles and clothing, construction materials, fertilizer, plastic products

Agriculture: accounts for 19% of GDP and 70% of exports; cash commodities - coffee, beef, bananas, sugar; other food crops include corn, rice, beans, potatoes; normally self-sufficient in food except for grain; depletion of forest resources resulting in lower timber output

Illicit drugs: transshipment country for cocaine and heroin from South America; illicit production of cannabis on small, scattered plots

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 950 km (260 km electrified)

Highways:

total: 35,560 km

Inland waterways: about 730 km, seasonally navigable

Pipelines: petroleum products 176 km

Ports: Caldera, Golfito, Moin, Puerto Limon, Puerto Quepos, Puntarenas

Airports:

total: 174

Defence Forces

Branches: Civil Guard, Coast Guard, Air Section, Rural Assistance Guard; note - the Constitution prohibits armed forces