



Experiencing Pura Vida

San Jose, Costa Rica, is about to shake up the MICE industry by launching its new convention center this year.

BY AUBRIE GERBER

Costa Rica may be known as the land of plenty for nature enthusiasts looking to embrace the “pure life” lifestyle of Central America, but the bustling capital of San Jose will soon become an epicenter for the MICE industry when Costa Rica Convention Center debuts in 2018. The venue will make San Jose the ideal destination for not only incentive programs, but also conferences and conventions.

“It was vital for the new convention center to be environmentally friendly because it aligns with our country’s ongoing commitment to sustainability,” says Alejandro Castro Alfaro, director of marketing for the Costa Rica Tourism Board.

The country claims 5 percent of the world’s biodiversity and protects 26 percent of its landmass. Naturally, the 168,000-sq.-ft.

convention center is a bioclimatic and environmentally sustainable building accommodating 4,600 attendees. Among the highlights: reflective roofing and sunshades to diminish solar heating, solar-powered water heating, reusable rainwater for irrigation, energy-saving air-conditioning systems, motion-activated LED interior lighting, solar-powered exterior lighting and much more.

Speaking of green, Alfaro says the goal is to attract 950 events to the convention center in the next five years. That would generate \$1.3 billion in revenue.

You can’t visit San Jose without exploring the untouched nature that is breathed into every ounce of the country. In less than an hour, attendees can find themselves surrounded by rainforest with myriad activities to pursue. Whether your group wants to explore treetops via zip line or aerial tram, sample brew at a coffee plantation, hike the tallest volcano in Costa Rica or hit the river for thrilling whitewater rafting, there’s no shortage of activities for all experience levels.

Convention Center Breakdown

Location: 5 miles from Juan Santamaria International Airport (approx. 12 minutes)

Size: 167,900 square feet; 25 acres

Max capacity: 4,600

On-site: Flexible indoor and outdoor space, exhibition area, conference rooms, VIP meeting rooms, press room, registration areas and restaurants/kitchens



Break Away

Whether you're a seasoned thrill-seeker or an amateur adventurer, there are day trips suitable for each attendee. One thing is certain when you're visiting San Jose: Get out there!

Volcanoes: If you spot mountains surrounding San Jose, odds are they're volcanoes. Drive then hike to the top of the active Poas Volcano to stand in awe of the massive crater filled with icy-blue sulfuric water, or visit Irazu Volcano, the highest active volcano in Costa Rica clocking in at 11,260 feet above sea level.

La Paz Waterfall Gardens: Along with five breathtaking waterfalls situated among cloud and rainforest, guests can experience a rescued wildlife preserve with toucans, monkeys, jaguars, pumas, hummingbirds and myriad other species.

Doka Estate: From seed to cup, learn the step-by-step process of growing coffee beans at the largest coffee plantation in Costa Rica. You'll also get the chance to sample authentic Costa Rican coffee.

Canopy Tours: Rainforest Adventures Costa Rica Atlantic is the go-to spot for zip lining through lush jungle and waterfalls or gliding along the treetops on the longest aerial tram in the country.

Whitewater Rafting: Experience the abundant flora and fauna of Costa Rica's rainforest and tropical forest while rafting down Class III-IV rapids on the Pacuare River with Rios Tropicales.

Who's met in Costa Rica recently:

VII Inter-American Emergency Medicine Congress (May 2017)

Latin American Pediatric Association, ALAPE (June 2017)

Mesoamerican and Caribbean Pediatrics Federation (June 2017)

Costa Rican Association of Pediatricians (June 2017)

Basecamp

From a colonial hacienda located on a coffee plantation minutes from the airport to a small-scale convention center corporate hotel (the largest meeting space in San Jose prior to the new convention center), the city's accommodations fit any meeting size. Looking to scale back from the grand convention center? These spots also have plenty of meeting space for your gatherings:

Wyndham San Jose Herradura Hotel & Convention Center
Guest rooms: 230
Meeting rooms: 12
Ballroom capacity: 1,800

Real InterContinental San Jose
Guest rooms: 372
Meeting rooms: 13
Ballroom capacity: 2,000

Costa Rica Marriott Hotel San Jose
Guest rooms: 299
Meeting rooms: 28
Ballroom capacity: 1,000



Cultural Cuisine

The best way to savor the rich culture of Costa Rica is by indulging in its traditional cuisine. If you're planning a banquet menu, be sure these items make the list!

Gallo pinto: A mix of beans and rice served with a savory cumin-Worcestershire sauce, and a staple for breakfast

Chorreada con natilla: A corn tortilla and pancake hybrid usually served with sour cream

Crema de pejibaye (peach palm soup): A creamy soup made from the pejibaye fruit, a starchy peach palm that tastes

like a nutty baked potato when cooked

Patacones: Deep-fried and flattened plantains, commonly served as a snack with guacamole, pico de gallo and black beans

Arroz con leche: A key Costa Rican dessert of warm rice pudding made with sweetened condensed milk, cinnamon and rice

Agua dulce: A common beverage among native Costa Ricans prepared by mixing hot water or milk with local raw cane sugar

Horchata: A sweet, creamy beverage made with ground rice, sweetened condensed milk and cinnamon

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