

Jaco Beach, Costa Rica

Airport Arrival and Transportation

Upon arrival at the airport, make sure that you have your Immigration and Customs forms complete. Pass through Immigration and then collect your luggage. Then go through Customs and proceed outside the terminal to the street where the taxi and shuttles pick-up.

EMERGENCY TIP! Ask to borrow a Porters cell phone. Tip them a dollar or two for use of the phone.

It's about 60 miles from San Jose to Jaco; expect the trip to take an hour and 15 minutes.

- **Car rental** – A rental car will give you the flexibility to explore outside of Jaco and may also be convenient during the rainy season to get around. Be warned that you may get a low quote on the internet but insurance charges when you arrive may be high. Below are some reputable rental agencies. See driving directions starting on page 5.
 - **Adobe (recommended)** contact Nelson Chacon ventasgte@adobecar.com
 - **Budget Car Rental:** www.budget.co.cr
 - **Economy Rent a Car:** www.economyrentacar.com
 - **Europcar:** www.europcar.co.cr
 - **Alamo:** www.alamocostarica.com
- **Private Shuttle (recommended)** – an air-conditioned van will be waiting for you at the airport for a cost of \$90. I recommend Nabor Moya who speaks perfect English and will wait for you at the airport exit with a sign with your name on it. His email is nabormoya@hotmail.com and his cell phone is +506 8393-3657.
- **Shared Shuttle** – These shuttles typically depart from the airport twice a day in the morning and late afternoon and are shared. Typical cost is between \$30 and \$40 per person. If you don't rent a car, this is a great way to get around the country. Try www.graylinecostarica.com or www.interbusonline.com.
- **Taxi** – A taxi from the airport should cost about \$80 to Jaco. Negotiate the price before you get in. Typically, the red taxis will be cheaper as opposed to the orange ones that work at the airport. If you see a red one driving through the terminal then flag them down. Once in Jaco, taxis are readily available and will only cost about \$2 to get anywhere in town.
- **Public Transportation** – the bus is an option but it's difficult to take public transportation from the airport to Jaco. The reason is because no buses depart from the airport to Jaco. You first have to take a taxi to the bus terminal called the "Terminal 7 – 10" in downtown San Jose that is about 25 minutes away and that will cost between \$20 & \$30. Then you have to wait for the bus to Jaco that departs every 2 hours and the terminal is not the safest place in Costa Rica. If you will be arriving after dark I would highly recommend that you take a taxi straight to Jaco or arrange a private shuttle. When you return to the airport the buses from Jaco drop off at the terminal and the cost is only about \$4 so if you are trying to save money then this will be the most affordable route on the way back. Bus tickets can be purchased online www.transportesjacoruta655.com/venta/venta.php.
- **Golf Cart Rentals** – an excellent way to get around town. <https://www.jacogolfcart.com/>

What to Pack

Though the country is small, weather varies dramatically by region in Costa Rica. Forecasts for the larger cities are not good indicators of the conditions in Jaco. At Jaco beach, daytime temperatures in the HIGH SEASON (Mid-December through April) are generally in the upper 80's and nighttime lows are in the 70's. In the GREEN SEASON (May through Mid-December) daytime highs are in the low 80's and nighttime lows are in the lower 70's. Expect rain in the green season, though it is likely to be preceded by sunshine and followed by sunshine. Rain is less likely in the high season but is not uncommon. Unlike Jaco, since San Jose is at altitude, it can get chilly in the evening – particularly in the green season. Jaco is extremely casual – shorts, swimwear and sandals are okay everywhere. Long pants are unnecessary for Jaco but may be desired for San Jose or any special events you may have planned.

You may also want to consider clothing needed for any tours you might desire. If you plan a short trip over to Manuel Antonio Park, a jungle Canopy Tour or an ATV expedition, you'll need sturdy tennis shoes or hiking shoes. If you plan a fishing excursion or golf at Los Suenos Resort, pack appropriately. The sun can be intense here, so remember your sunscreen, hat and sunglasses. Flip-flops or beach shoes are a good idea. All of these things can also be purchased readily in town!

Other Notes

- You will need your original passport only if you are driving or if you need to do any transaction at the bank. Otherwise it's advisable that you only carry a copy of your passport.
- Jaco is a fairly small town that is flat which makes it very easy to get around on foot and on a bicycle. You can rent bikes, scooters, or motorcycles at AXR tours and rentals www.axrjaco.com.
- Costa Rica's electrical system and plug configuration is the same as in the U.S. Any devices you wish to bring should work fine.
- Your U.S. mobile phone will probably not work in Costa Rica. Check with your service provider to determine service availability. If you have an unlocked phone that can accept a SIM card then you can purchase a pre-paid phone chip here in Jaco for approximately \$2 and add minutes at any market as needed.
- All restaurants and businesses in Jaco accept payment in U.S. dollars and most will take credit cards. You can exchange dollars for Colones by paying in dollars and receiving change in Colones and they should give you a fair exchange rate which is currently around 600 Colones = \$1. Restaurants may not accept bills larger than \$20 so bring a lot of small bills. ATMs are available in Jaco. **DO NOT BRING TRAVELERS CHECKS** and definitely don't change your money at the airport because the exchange rates are terrible.
- Safety and personal security are essentially the same in Costa Rica as in any tourist destination. Use common sense and reasonable caution.
- The waves can get large on occasion here in Jaco especially between May and October so use extreme caution when swimming in the ocean.

Tours and Things To Do

I would be glad to help you book tours and below is a list of the ones that I recommend.



- Villa Caletas: **highly recommended**. This is a hotel about 15 minutes north of Jaco where you can go to watch the sunset and get a drink. An amphitheater was built into the side of a 1,000 cliff that overlooks the jungles to the ocean and you are likely to see the most breathtaking sunset of your life and it's free to visit. A taxi will run about \$18 each way.

www.villacaletas.com

- Manuel Antonio National Park: About an hour south of Jaco, this national park is situated on

beautiful white sand beaches where you are sure to see monkeys, sloths, and a variety of reptiles and birds such as toucans and scarlet macaws. A guide will help you make the most of your trip. \$16 entry and closed on Mondays. Pack a lunch and swimsuit to enjoy the beautiful beach. Just don't leave your bags unattended because the monkeys and raccoons will rummage through them. Make sure to go early in the morning and you will see more wildlife.



- Canopy Tour: Zip line through the jungles to platforms on the treetops.
- Crocodile Tour: Get up and close with huge crocodiles as your guide steps out of the boat and plays with them right in front of you. (pictured right).

- Surf Lessons: Jaco is the perfect place to learn how to surf. I highly recommend surf instructor Jairo Perez who is a professional surfer. His phone # is +506 8720-9157 and his email is Jairosurfing@gmail.com.
- Kayak and SUP (Stand Up Paddle) tours. www.kayakjaco.com offers a night tour that paddles out at sunset and returns by moonlight.
- Surf Contest & after party every starts at 4pm every Saturday at the Backyard Bar in Hermosa Beach.
- Coffee workshop: learn how to prepare coffee correctly with 3 different methods www.cafebohio.com
- Sport Fishing: Expensive but world class fishing.
- Discovery Horseback Tours: ride on the beach or in the jungle and to the volcanic spa mud and spring fed pools www.horseridecostarica.com is the best.
- ATV tours and bike rentals - AXR is a tour company that rents bikes, scooters, motorcycles and quads www.axrjaco.com.
- Waterfall repel and canyoning. www.oceanranchpark.com
- Waterfall Tours: I HIGHLY RECOMMEND the extreme adventure tour for waterfall jumping. You need to be in good shape for this one but they offer mellow tours as well (Pictured right). www.costaricawaterfalltours.com
- White water rafting: HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Book a half day trip down the Naranjo River. The river offers class 3, 4 & 5 rapids and can be very intense. (Pictured below)



- Lapaz Waterfall Gardens: This hidden jewel is 2.5 hours north of Jaco and a must do!! It is pricy getting there but well worth the drive. They have an Aviary where you can see all types of tropical birds, a butterfly sanctuary, all types of monkeys that you can get close to, a hummingbird garden where you can feed the hummingbirds, snakes, a rainarium (frogs are climbing freely in a natural setting), a waterfall trail and much more. www.waterfallgardens.com. You can combine this with a coffee tour or volcano tour.

Restaurants in and around Jaco

High End – Average main dish price around \$15

- Graffiti Restaurant and Wine Bar – Great wine list and ever-changing specials board. Try the coffee/cacao crusted filet mignon and tuna tartar tower. Only open for dinner and closed on Sunday. Located in Jaco Walk.
- Amancio's – Italian restaurant with outstanding pizza that is made in their brick oven and they also make their pastas from scratch. I like the "Mama Mia" pizza. Located below Lemon Zest.
- Puddle Fish – One of the best lunch and dinner venues in Jaco featuring gourmet sandwiches, salads & fish tacos. Here is an example, "roasted Portobello, baby swiss, wilted spinach with pecan and arugula pesto. Closed Monday and located in Jaco Walk. Great Sunday brunch with bottomless mimosas.
- Lemon Zest – Chef from Florida who has a great gourmet menu that includes fish, steak, chicken, duck and veggie dishes. Only open for dinner and closed on Monday.
- Tsunami Sushi – The tuna doesn't get any fresher and the unique rolls are unbeatable. Try the crunch roll. ½ price rolls on Wednesday and Friday and everyday for lunch. Located in Jaco Walk.
- Green Room Café – Fantastic breakfast, lunch and dinner open 9am – 11pm. Try the Wooster Sandwich! Crab cake eggs benedict, fish tacos, burgers and more. **Live music every night.**

- El Novillo Alegre – Argentinian steak house with some of the best steaks in the region. A bit pricey but excellent quality and great atmosphere.
- Lanterna – Italian food with great atmosphere. Located 15 minutes north in the marina at the Los Suenos Marriott Resort. Find a table upstairs on the balcony or on the waterfront.

Mid-Range – Average dish around \$8

- Jerah – Authentic Thai and Balinese cuisine. Everything on the menu is great.
- Chinita Pacifica – HIDDEN GEM. Hole in the wall with meals worth well beyond the 3,000 Colones that they charge. From Subway cross over the bridge and turn right and it's on the left side after the jewelry shop. Open 8am – 3pm.
- Ohana Sushi – ridiculously good sushi. Try the “no regrets” roll.
- Wishbone – Local favorite. Wide range of food from pizzas to pitas to salads. They have a few specialty dishes like their tuna poki bowl and chicken in oyster sauce that are a little costlier but worth the price. Closed on Wednesdays.
- Sabress – Israeli food at it best with great hummus, shawarma, falafel pitas, etc. Just up the road from Pops.
- Costa Juice – Your healthy option serving fresh organic salads, sandwiches, smoothies and acai bowls. Try the “Carara Jungle Bowl.” Open 8am – 7pm.

Local and affordable - Average dish around \$4

- Panaderia Artesanal – HIGHLY RECOMMENDED and just steps from the Paradise condos. This bakery has great coffee, eggs made any way you choose, fresh bread, quiches, and much more. I like to order eggs with sourdough slices or a bagel with lox. Closed Wednesdays.
- Soda Rustico – Probably the most popular local food restaurant. Rice and beans with fish, chicken or beef with a side salad or two. Open for lunch and dinner until 7pm.
- Soda Garabito – Hugely popular and a lot like Rustico but less greasy. I like to go here for breakfast where they will prepare eggs any way you want with sides of gallo pinto, homemade tortillas and salad for \$3.50.
- Soda Isaga – Located just across the street from the Paradise condos, this local restaurant and bar has great rice with chicken, ceviche and seafood soup.
- Pachi's Pan – The most popular bakery in town. Try the empanadas with chicken.

Coffee – I am a coffee snob and below are my recommendation for the best places to get your caffeine fix.

- Café Bohio – Probably the best coffee in town but also the most expensive. Located right on the main strip.
- Café Del Mar – For 800 Colones you can't go wrong with a café latte across the street from the park.

Beer – check out the local craft beer at Puddle Fish (Jaco Walk), the Beer House, Jaco Bar and the Green Room.

Jaco Walk - This is a new outdoor plaza with great atmosphere and a number of REALLY good dining options like Tsunami Sushi, Graffiti, Side Street, a gourmet hamburger restaurant, a brewery, champagne and cigar bar, and a number of desert options.

Grocery Stores - First a word about the stores. If you start purchasing everything you are accustomed to purchase in North America, then you will be surprised upon check-out how expensive everything is because it is probably imported. However, if you shop for local products especially fruits and vegetables then it can be quite cheap.

- Mas X Menos – Down town by the bank (walking distance). This is the BEST market in Jaco to buy your groceries at.
- Multi Ahorros – this is the store that is attached to the condo complex just outside the gate on the right. It is good for your immediate needs but is not the best.

- Fruit and Veggie Market – HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Turn left at Pops and go half way down the street on your right side. This is where the locals shop for their fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Farmers Market – This is only on Fridays and located by the soccer field on the south end of town. They have fresh vegetables and fruit directly from the farmers. Look for the Mennonite Family that has baked goods and amazing granola.

Church - There is a fantastic non-denominational church called Horizon that has services in English at 10am on Sunday mornings. The church is next to the Costa Linda Condos on the first entrance to Jaco www.horizonjaco.org.

Entertainment & Night Life

Bars and Casinos

- Puddle Fish – Located in Jaco Walk, this is the only local brewery that produces some fine craft beer.
- The Beer House - 10 local craft beers on tap as well many bottle options. Great casual atmosphere and friendly service. Open after 3pm and closed Wednesdays.
- Jaco Bar – pub with great atmosphere located on the 2nd floor across the street from Mas x Menos.
- The Orange Pub – Bar with loud music and casual atmosphere gets going around 11pm.
- Jaco Blu – Wednesday night party and Sunday afternoon pool party.
- Le Loft – Club type atmosphere that gets going late meaning after midnight.
- Club Wave - another late-night party spot.
- Croc’s Casino Resort – This is the best casino in town.

NOT recommended - The reality of Costa Rica is that prostitution is legal and there are 3 places in Jaco where it is prevalent. One is called the Beatle Bar, one is called the Man Cave and the last is called the Cocal Casino. You probably wouldn’t notice that it happens here without me pointing it out, but it is better that I warn you so that you don’t accidentally visit those establishments.

Safety - Jaco Beach is VERY safe, and you are fine walking up and down the main strip even late at night. Petty theft is uncommon but use common sense as you would in any resort town. For example, don’t leave your camera or backpack on your towel while you go swimming in the ocean for a long time. The condo complex is extremely safe!

Citi Cinemas – This theatre has 4 screens and is located on the 2nd floor of Plaza Coral (same as KFC & Pizza Hut). For movie selection and times, you can visit <https://ccmcinemas.com/cines/6/cartelera/>. Note that the movies that say “Dob” will be dubbed in Spanish and the ones that say “Sub” will be in English with Spanish subtitles.

Spa – you will see many massage parlors walking through town where you can get a cheap massage but for the best experience head to the Acqua Spa located in front of the 8 story Aqua building next to the Best Western.

Pharmacy - You can go into any Pharmacy to get antibiotics, sleeping pills, muscle relaxers, ECT. You can buy anything over the counter except for narcotics. They are all over town but if you walk outside the condos and cross the street then you will see Sofia’s Pharmacia on the right side. If you need anything including a shot, they can give them to you and they also have a doctor on call.

Directions to Jaco

First is a piece of driving advice. There are signs everywhere that are upside down triangles that say Ceda al paso which means to yield to oncoming traffic. There are a bunch of one way bridges and onramps in Costa Rica with these signs where you will have to wait for all the oncoming traffic to pass before you are to go.

From the airport if you were to walk out of the terminal then you will see the highway directly in front of you (Highway #1). Make a mental note that Jaco is to the left and San Jose is to the right. So if you take a taxi or shuttle to get a rental car then make sure that you are heading toward Jaco since a lot of people make the mistake of going into San Jose instead. If you pick up a rental car from the airport then exit the airport and take the first off ramp only a few hundred meters ahead on the right side that points to Alajuela. That will spin you around and point you in the opposite direction heading toward Jaco. Immediately you have to merge onto another road and you want to stay in the left lane that has a sign pointing to San Ramon. **Don't** go to the right where the sign points to Alejuela.

If you take a taxi or shuttle to the rental car place then you will most likely head toward San Jose. So once you get your car then get back on the highway and head back toward the airport. As you are approaching the airport the two left lanes will take you to the airport and the right lane will keep you on the highway where you want to go but make sure that you don't take the first exit to the right that points to Alajuela.

From there it's going to take you about 5-8 minutes to where you need to be on the lookout for a big white "Dos Pinos" factory on the left side of the highway. It's easy to spot at night because it has green lights on it. Just beyond Dos Pinos you will see an overpass that you will need to take heading to the left and to do this you need to exit RIGHT and then loop back over the highway.

Continue straight for about 5 minutes after going over the overpass until you hit a stop sign at a traffic circle. Veer to the right where the sign points to Orotina and that will put you on highway #27 where you will have to pay a toll immediately. At the toll booths you will need to go to a line that has a green light (except for the one that says "exclusivo Quick Pass") and the fees should range from about 200 Colones to 700 Colones (.40 cents - \$1.40) and you can pay with dollars if you do not have Colones and they will give you change in Colones.

From here continue straight and you will hit another toll booth in about 5-10 minutes. Continue straight and after about 15 minutes you will hit the last toll booth. After this toll booth you will immediately merge to the right to get off the highway onto the coastal road (highway 34). There is a sign pointing to Jaco.

From here it's about 30 minutes to Jaco.

Returning to the airport

Exit Jaco and turn left. After about 30 minutes you will exit right following the signs pointing to San Jose and Orotina. Immediately you will have to pay a toll.

About 15 minutes later you will have to pay another toll and about 10 minutes beyond that you will exit where the sign points to **Coyol/Siquiares** where you will have to pay a final toll. After paying this toll you will need to go around the traffic circle and over the highway to the left and then you will go around another traffic circle and FOLLOW THE SIGN TO COYOL.

From here continue straight for about 3-5 minutes where you will need to exit right just before going over the 4 lane highway (Highway #1). When you exit right merge all the way onto the highway (don't veer to the right that will put you on a side road). Continue straight for 5-8 minutes and you will see the exit for the airport.