



## Tentative Itinerary: 10 Days in Costa Rica

### (Family & Gluten-Free Focus)

#### Logistics & Preparation

- **Transport:** Renting a mid-size SUV (4x4 recommended for Monteverde) is best for 3 adults + 1 child. Alternatively, private shuttles (Interbus or RideCR) are stress-free.
  - **Weather in June:** Mornings are typically hot and sunny. Rain usually starts around 2:00 PM. **Schedule all outdoor activities for 7:00 AM – 1:00 PM.**
  - **Packing:** Light rain jackets, waterproof hiking shoes/sandals (Keens/Texas), insect repellent, and quick-dry clothing.
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#### Days 1-4: La Fortuna (Arenal Volcano)

*Adventure, Hot Springs, and Rainforest Chocolate*

##### Day 1: Arrival & The Drive

- **Morning:** Arrive at SJO Airport. Pick up rental car. Likely rental [LINK](#)
- **Drive:** SJO to La Fortuna (**approx. 3 hours**). Roads are paved and scenic.
- **Check-in: Hotel Los Lagos Spa & Resort.**
  - *Why:* Incredible value for families. Includes huge onsite hot springs, water slides, and a view of the volcano.
- Alternate: Cabanas Caeli [LINK](#)
- **Dinner: Organico Fortuna.**
  - *GF Note:* Very allergy-aware with clear labeling; excellent healthy tropical food.

##### Day 2: Sloths & Chocolate

- **08:00 AM: Bogarin Trail Sloth Tour** (Pre-bookable).
  - *Why:* Flat, easy walking for an 8-year-old. High chance of seeing sloths and toucans.
- **12:00 PM: Lunch at Soda La Hormiga** (local "Casado" plates; ask for grilled meats/rice/beans without salsa Lizano to be safe, or plain plantains).
- **02:00 PM: Rainforest Chocolate Tour.**
  - *Why:* Interactive! The 8-year-old can grind cocoa beans and taste the "fruit of the gods." A cultural hit.
- **Evening:** Relax in the hotel hot springs.

##### Day 3: Hanging Bridges & Volcano Views

- **07:30 AM: Mistico Arenal Hanging Bridges Park.**
  - *Why:* You walk *in* the canopy on suspension bridges. Magical for kids.
- **Lunch: Restaurante Don Rufino** (Fine dining but family-friendly).



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- *GF Note:* High-end kitchen, very knowledgeable about Celiac/cross-contamination.
  - **Afternoon:** Free time or visit **La Fortuna Waterfall** (warning: 500 steps down and up—might be tough for some adults/kids depending on fitness, but swimming at the bottom is worth it).
  - **Dinner: Chifa La Familia Feliz** (Peruvian-Chinese fusion; many GF options using rice flour/potatoes).
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### Days 4-6: Monteverde (Cloud Forest)

*Misty Forests, Coffee Culture, and Cooler Air*

#### Day 4: The Scenic Transfer

- **Morning:** Drive La Fortuna to Monteverde (**3.5 - 4 hours**).
  - *Note:* The last hour involves winding mountain roads. Take motion sickness meds if needed.
- **Check-in: Hotel Poco a Poco.**
  - *Why:* Heated indoor pool (crucial for the cooler Monteverde air), family suites, and a kids' play area.
- **Lunch: Taco Taco.**
  - *GF Note:* Authentic corn tortillas, casual vibe.
- **Evening: Kinkajou Night Walk.**
  - *Why:* 80% of wildlife comes out at night. You might see sleeping birds, tarantulas (cool for an 8-year-old!), and kinkajous.

#### Day 5: The Cloud Forest

- **07:30 AM: Reserva Curi-Cancho.**
    - *Why:* Less crowded than the main Monteverde reserve and better for birdwatching (Resplendent Quetzal).
  - **Lunch: Stella's Monteverde.**
    - *GF Note:* Great bakery options and aware of allergens.
  - **Afternoon: El Trapiche Tour.**
    - *Why:* A family-run cultural tour showing sugar cane processing, coffee, and bananas. Includes a ride in an ox-cart (kids love this).
  - **Dinner: Restaurante Toro Tinto.**
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#### Days 6-9: Manuel Antonio (Pacific Coast)

*Beaches, Monkeys, and 100% GF Luxury*

##### Day 6: Drive to the Coast

- **Morning:** Drive Monteverde to Manuel Antonio (**approx. 4 hours**).
  - *Stop: Tarcoles Bridge* (about halfway) to see the giant crocodiles from safely above.
- **Check-in: Arenas del Mar Beachfront & Rainforest Resort.**
  - *Why: This is the Holy Grail for GF travelers.* It is one of the only resorts in Central America with a fully supported Gluten-Free program (endorsed by Beyond Celiac). Staff is trained, and menus are extensive. Expensive, but worth the peace of mind for 3 nights.
  - *Budget Alternative: Si Como No Resort* (has a movie theater and family pool), dining at Arenas del Mar or other spots.
- Alternate hotel [LINK](#)
- **Dinner:** At the hotel (enjoy the stress-free GF dining).

##### Day 7: The National Park

- **07:00 AM: Manuel Antonio National Park Guided Tour.**
  - *Why: You need a guide* to spot the monkeys and sloths. The park ends at a pristine beach with calm waves perfect for an 8-year-old.
- **Lunch:** Picnic on the beach (pack GF snacks/fruit) or head to **El Avion**.
  - *Why: A restaurant built inside an old C-123 cargo plane.* The food is average, but the "cool factor" for an 8-year-old is 10/10.
- **Afternoon:** Pool time or beach time at Playa Espadilla.

##### Day 8: Catamaran & Snorkel

- **Morning: Catamaran Ocean King** or similar boat tour.
    - *Why:* Dolphin watching, slides off the boat, and snorkeling. Lunch is usually included (check GF status ahead, often fruit/rice/fish).
  - **Afternoon:** Relax.
  - **Dinner: Emilio's Cafe.**
    - *GF Note:* Famous for desserts and fresh seafood; very accommodating staff. Best view of the sunset.
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#### Day 9-10: Return to San José & Departure

##### Day 9: Return to City

- **Morning:** Last swim in the ocean.
- **Afternoon:** Drive Manuel Antonio to SJO Area (**approx. 3 hours**).
- **Check-in: Costa Rica Marriott Hotel Hacienda Belen** (near airport).
  - *Why:* A former coffee hacienda with beautiful architecture, pools, and a golf driving range.
- Alternate [LINK](#)
- **Dinner: La Casona de Laly** (Authentic Costa Rican food, very safe preparations).

##### Day 10: Fly Out

- **Morning:** Shuttle to SJO airport (10-15 mins away).
- *Tip:* Arrive 3 hours early; lines can be long.

### END OF ITINERARY

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#### Specific Gluten-Free "Cheat Sheet" for Costa Rica

- **Terminology:** "Soy celiaco/a" (I am celiac) or "Sin gluten" (Gluten-free).
- **Safe Bets:** *Casado* (traditional plate) is usually safe if you verify no bouillon (Cubito Maggi) was used in the rice/beans. Plain grilled fish (*pescado a la plancha*) and plantains (*platanos maduros*) are staples.
- **Watch out for:** "Salsa Lizano" (the national sauce) usually contains gluten. Ask for it on the side or omitted.