Costa Rica was sighted by Christopher Columbus in 1502, when he landed near Puerto Limón on the Atlantic shore. Believing he had discovered a land of vast wealth, he named it “Costa Rica,” which means “Rich Coast.” Unlike other parts of Central America, the colonization was relatively bloodless. The local inhabitants were mainly peaceful Indian farmers whose numbers were eventually depleted when introduced to European disease.

The first capital city was Cartago, founded in 1563. Eventually, the capital was moved West to San Jose in 1737. Independence from Spain was declared in 1821, beginning a period of civil war between the Liberal and Conservative factions.

After independence, the government anxiously sought goods that could be exported and taxed for revenue. Coffee, which had been introduced from Cuba, was the answer. The government offered free land to coffee growers, thus building a landowning class. The prosperity brought by coffee exportation since the 1850’s resulted in and settlement expansion.

Costa Rica’s long tradition of democracy began in 1889 and has continued to the present day. The only lapse in this record was in 1948, when the constitution was abolished and a military dictatorship took over. One year later, a new constitution was adopted and the army was permanently abolished. In 1983, the country made an official proclamation of neutrality.

Costa Rica today is a model of democracy and political stability. It boasts a fine health care system, telecommunications network and school systems with one of the highest literacy rates in the world - 92 percent.

HISTORY

Puerto Limón Map

CAPITAL
San Jose is the capital of Costa Rica.

LOCATION
Costa Rica is in the Central American Isthmus, with Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. It is flanked by the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean.

SIZE
The land area is about the size of West Virginia; a little under 20 thousand square miles. From north to south, Costa Rica stretches 275 miles.

POPULATION
About 4 million people live in Costa Rica, including a number of Americans.

LANGUAGE
Spanish is the official language. Many Costa Ricans speak English and French.

CURRENCY
The official currency is the “colón.” The United States dollar, credit cards and travelers checks are widely accepted.

TIME ZONE
Costa Rica is on United States Central Standard Time. The ship may not always follow local time. Please adhere to the ship’s time while in port.

TOURIST INFORMATION
There is not a tourist office in Puerto Limón.

DOCKING/TENDERING
The ship docks in Puerto Limón on the Caribbean Sea.

FAST FACTS

SHORE EXCURSIONS
Please check your tour ticket for the correct meeting time and location of your tour. Your cruise line representative will direct you to your transportation.

TRANSPORTATION
Red-colored taxis are at the pier. Some drivers speak better English than others. Taxis can be expensive. Confirm price before departing. The approximate hourly rate for a taxi is $30 and mini-vans (if available) are $35 per person. Round trip to San Jose: $250

HOW TO GET TO TOWN
All shops and activities are located within walking distance from the pier.

GUARANTEE

SHOPPING
Shops are located in the central market, a short distance from the pier.

STORE HOURS
Most stores are open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Saturday.

POST OFFICE HOURS
The post office is open from 8:00 am to 11:30 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The Postal Service in Costa Rica is extremely efficient. International mail and facsimile service is quite reliable.

PHONE LOCATIONS
Phones are located in the market.

EMERGENCY
In case of an emergency, dial 911.

DOCKING/TENDERING
The ship docks in Puerto Limón on the Caribbean Sea.

Your guide to port information

Shore Excursions

Puerto Limón is one of seven provinces in Costa Rica and the only one to be entirely on the Caribbean side of the Continental Divide. Limón consists of thick tropical jungles and sprawling banana plantations bordering the lofty Central Mountains. Twelve miles to the north of Puerto Limón is the international port of Moin. From here to the Nicaraguan border, 80 miles away, stretches the Totuguero Canal System. Running parallel to the sea, this system of natural and artificial waterways crisscrosses the jungle and mangrove-lined coast. Southward, a dirt road leads past white-sand beaches and picturesque fishing villages. The heavy annual rainfall in this province is essential for the forests and bananas, but can make traveling difficult. Over 25 percent of Costa Rica is protected for conservation purposes - serving as shelter to many species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and plants. This represents more than four percent of the world’s total floral and faunal species. The ship-offered shore tours are highly recommended for enjoying the beauty of Costa Rica.

Puerto Limón

Located 100 miles from San Jose, Puerto Limón is sometimes described as a Somerset Maugham town and represents Costa Rica’s slice of the Caribbean. The 60,000 residents are largely made up of descendants of Jamaican and Chinese immigrants. Export products such as coffee and bananas are transported here for loading onto outbound ships. A highway winds its way down to Limón from the 3,700 foot highlands. The drive from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean is approximately 155 miles.

Shopping

Costa Rica is known for its many arts and crafts, including wood figures, carved walking canes, toys, leather goods, wall hangings, coffee and more. Some small villages are famous for their hardwood ox carts, hand painted with traditional-geometric designs used since the beginning of the century. You can purchase miniature replicas and the colorful carthwheels of these wooden carts.

Transportation

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A. **Parque Vargas**
Parque Vargas, a five-minute walk from the ship, is located on the waterfront. This main attraction has beautiful tropical trees and flowers.

B. **Sea Wall**
Enjoy the pleasant walk along the sea wall of Puerto Limón. You can view the rocky headland upon which the city was built.

C. **Playa Bonita**
Located northwest of town, this sandy beach has places to eat and picnic areas. Enjoy the backdrop of tropical vegetation.

D. **Central Market**
This municipal market is where produce, crafts and sundries are sold.

E. **Veragua Rainforest**
Located less than one hour from the port, Veragua Rainforest is the ultimate research and adventure park that includes a gondola ride through the canopy, interactive flora and fauna displays, and walking trails.