Costa Rica was discovered 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.” Local inhabitants were mainly farmers whose numbers were depleted when introduced to European disease.

The Independence from Spain was declared in 1821, beginning a period of civil war. After independence, the government anxiously sought goods that could be exported and taxed. Coffee had been introduced from Cuba. It is tradition that coffee has brought prosperity to Costa Rica’s democracy. In 1983, the country made an official proclamation of neutrality. Costa Rica today is a model of democracy and political stability. Today, coffee, the “golden bean”, plays an important role in this country’s economy. The port of Puntarenas once served as the main port for coffee export to Chile, where it was packaged for sale and sent to England. The country now exports to 50 different nations with 47% coming to the United States.

HISTORY

Docking/Tendering
Ships dock in Puntarenas.

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
A small supply of red colored taxis are available at the pier. Drivers speak little English. Cabs can be expensive. Agree on a price before departing.

How to Get to Town
The city of San José is located 70 miles from Puntarenas. It is recommended to take one of the ship’s excursions to San José. Complimentary shuttle vans will transport you to the end of the pier.

Shopping
A few craft stands are located ashore near the pier.

Store Hours
Stores are open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Saturday.

Bank Hours
Banks are open from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Post Office Hours
The post office is open from 8:00 am to 11:30 am and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Phone Locations
At the end of the pier, you may purchase phone cards to make long distance calls.

Emergency
In case of an emergency, dial 911.

Guarantee
Shop with confidence, knowing that all merchants on this map have been carefully selected and each offers a 60-day guarantee to cruise line guests. This guarantee ensures buyers that all recommended merchants will repair or replace any unsatisfactory item, excluding buyer’s negligence, buyer’s remorse and lost or stolen merchandise. For purposes of determining quality and value of jewelry related to a buyer’s complaint, only appraisals secured by a buyer from independent graduate gemologists, not affiliated with any retail jeweler, will be acceptable. Please inquire about individual store return policies before finalizing any purchase.

The port shopping program is operated by Onboard Media; Inc. Participating merchants have paid an advertising fee to Onboard Media for inclusion in this program. Onboard Media handles all customer relations claims relating to the guarantee. If you become aware of a problem during the cruise, please contact the Shopping Guide onboard for immediate assistance. If a problem arises after the cruise but within 60 days of the purchase date, contact the Customer Relations Department at Onboard Media, 1991 Michigan Ave. Suite 600, Miami Beach 33139, Phone: (800) 396-2999, Fax: (305) 673-2741, Email: shoppingissues@onboard.com, Hours: Monday through Thursday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm; Friday 9:00 am to 5:30 pm EST (Eastern Standard Time)

Please send a letter and include the name of the ship, cruise date, store name and merchandise problem. Also enclose a copy of the sales receipt and any relevant documents relating to the sale. Onboard Media will contact the recommended store on your behalf for repair or replacement, and you will be notified accordingly.

Placess to See

Puntarenas is the largest city in the Central Pacific region. Located on a narrow peninsula in the Gulf of Nicoya, it is Costa Rica’s main port. Puntarenas bustles on the weekend. “Puntarenas” means “sandy point”. It is a traditional fishing village developing for the future. The new pier opened in 1998. Complimentary shuttle vans will transport you to the end of the pier. The town features a college, pool hall, a few rustic bars and a collection of businesses primarily for the locals. The walk along the waterfront is pleasant but expect a variety of vendors selling local crafts. Away from the port, the region’s unspoiled beauty emerges. Rain forests start at the coastline and continue into the mountain ranges with rivers, waterfalls, parks and wildlife preserves. About 20 miles south of Puntarenas is Carara Biological Reserve, covering over 11,750 acres of virgin-slime tropical forest. Despite the lushness of the vegetation, the undergrowth is relatively clear, making it easy to observe wildlife.

San Jose
Located about 70 miles inland from Puntarenas, San José became the capital of Costa Rica in 1821. Surrounded by mountains, it sits at a 3,700 foot elevation. The province of San José will most likely be the focal point of your visit to Costa Rica. It is a modern city with a variety of architectural styles - from new high-rise structures in the downtown business district, to Spanish colonial buildings in many of the older central residential districts. Sights worth investigating:

The National Theatre
Built in the 1860’s, located in San José this National Monument has a Renaissance-style exterior representing music, dance and fame. This creates the perfect environment to view a theatrical or musical performance.

The National Museum
The National Museum located in San José was founded in 1887 to study, preserve and exhibit Costa Rica’s historic past. The museum displays Pre-Columbian art including pottery, stone and gold. Objects and photographs document the nation’s political and economic history. Colonial religious paintings and sculptures can also be seen at this museum.

Shopping at Sarchi
About one hour this side of San José, you’ll find Sarchi, home of many Costa Rican native products. It’s here that you’ll find many arts and crafts, including wood figures, carved walking canes, toys, leather goods, wall hangings, coffee and more. The villagers are famous for their hardwood ox carts, hand painted with traditional geometric designs and used since the beginning of the century. In Sarchi, you can purchase miniature replicas and the colorful cartwheels of these wooden carts.

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