

A Perfect Destination in Costa Rica: the Osa Peninsula and Bosque del Cabo



We just returned from our sixth trip to Costa Rica -- to the south this time and the Osa Peninsula. My wife found Bosque del Cabo on TripAdvisor and it looked like the perfect place.

Perfect it was! Hundreds of acres of protected primary jungle at the end of the Osa Peninsula, with the Bosque del Cabo lodge on the tip -- beautiful views of the ocean, many hiking trails, beach and jungle, wildlife, great food, and a cool breeze in the afternoon. The Bosque del Cabo reserve is next to the famous Corcovado National Park and shares the amazing range of wildlife. Endangered spider monkeys played every night in the trees in front of our casa. We saw macaws, toucans, peccaries and rare sloths on the trails, and I heard a large cat one night.

How to get there: We flew from the US to San Jose -- an excellent airport. If you like coffee, don't miss the Britt stand. I had one of the best cafe mochas ever, equal to

Dersut in Venice, Italy. Buy a bag of beans on your way out. From San Jose, you can catch Nature Air or Sansa to the small town of Puerto Jimenez (PJ) on the Osa Peninsula. I prefer Nature Air, which departs from the main terminal at the San Jose airport. The flight is roughly 50 minutes in a twin turboprop. *A tip:* fly in and out in the morning, before the afternoon thunderstorms build over the mountains, which can lead to Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. (If you are my age and enjoyed Disneyland, you know what I mean!)

Arrival: Puerto Jimenez is a quaint coastal town, quintessential Costa Rica, not swamped by tourists. Everyone is very friendly and helpful. Bosque del Cabo will arrange transport from the small airport to/from the lodge. There are a couple of banks, the B&M market if you want to buy food and liquor, and a farmacia for meds -- all of the essentials. The B&M market and the farmacia accept US credit cards -- which will give you a much better exchange rate than the "currency" shops in the airports. *Tip:* call your credit card company before you travel, to let them know you will be in Costa Rica. You don't want to hear "Your card was not accepted".

Transport to/from Bosque del Cabo: The trip from PJ to Bosque del Cabo takes about 30 minutes over good gravel roads -- a nice drive compared to many of our Costa Rican adventures. Cars are available for rent in Puerto Jimenez, e.g. from Solid Car Rental, but the supply is limited and you will need to confirm your reservation well in advance. A 4-wheel drive SUV is a good idea in case it rains heavily. The road crosses two streams between Puerto Jimenez and Bosque del Cabo; no problem during our stay, but they can wash out in a tropical downpour. *A tip:* We decided to cancel our rental car and asked Bosque del Cabo to take us to/from PJ as needed. Their drivers were always available, and the total cost was less than the car rental. The Bosque driver also delivered us to the PJ airport for our 7am flight back home -- with no "rental car return" hassles.

Money: Bosque del Cabo and most stores accept dollars and US credit cards. Some colones are helpful, however, for small purchases and tips. Stop at the bank in PJ and pick up a bunch of 2,000 colones bills. (2,000 colones = 4 dollars.) The exchange rate at the bank will be much better than the currency exchange shops in the airports. Tip generously; Costa Rica is not a wealthy country and your kindness will be greatly appreciated.

Food: Bosque del Cabo offers *excellent* food - the best we've found at any place we've stayed in Costa Rica. We met both of the chefs, who have a real talent for the art of cooking and Costa Rican cuisine. The dining room is a large, open area covered by a high palm frond roof -- with larger tables in the center for families and small tables for 2 or 4 around the edge. If you want a romantic night or a family dinner, they have the right setting. There is a nice open-air bar / family area next to the pool, where most of the guests gather in the evening before dinner. Ask for their 'special' Tico Sour with basil (yes, basil!) or a fresh lemonade with ginger. This is also a great place to stop for a cold drink after a long hike.

All of this said, my wife likes to cook and we reserved Casa Coco (with a fully furnished kitchen) so we bought food and supplies at the B&M market in Puerto Jimenez and she cooked two dinners for us. Casa Coco is a great option for a family or group, and you can buy everything you need at the B&M if you want a private dinner.



There are specials every night, not a fixed menu.

Lodging: Bosque del Cabo is a small, personal place -- not a big 'resort'. They offer approximately 10 cabinas and small houses, some tucked into the jungle and others with views of the ocean. Most are separate and private. With the range of options, this is a great place for one person, a romantic couple, a family or a wedding party. Our group included our teenage son, his friend and my brother -- so we reserved Casa Coco, a house with two large bedrooms and baths, plus two small bedrooms attached to the garage, a full kitchen, living room, large deck and private pool. (Photos are attached at the end.)

Activities: You can spend all of your time on the trails around Bosque del Cabo, hiking through the jungle, down to the beach, etc. The hike to the beach from Casa Coco is beautiful at sunset; our footprints were the only ones on the black sand. The trails were in perfect condition -- the best we have seen over 20 years in Costa Rica. From a quiet walk to a challenging trek, Bosque has trails for you. *A tip:* take your time and move slowly. Hiking in the jungle is about 'seeing', not 'marching' to a destination! I stopped at one point to check the tree tops and spotted a sloth hanging from a branch. You will also see more wildlife early in the morning or around nightfall. (Be sure to bring a headlamp.)



The only footprints on the black sand beach were ours

We also booked a kayak trip out of Puerto Jimenez -- up the river then back on the Golfo Dulce / ocean side, which was amazing. (The kayaks are 'sit on tops' so no experience is required.) Our guide was very knowledgeable. This is a not-to-be-missed adventure. My son also wanted to go fishing, so we booked a deep sea trip out of PJ with a local boat -- another great adventure. *Tip:* Use lots of sunscreen with 40+ SPF, and apply more every few hours. The sweat-resistant 'sport' versions are best.

And... surfing lessons! The Golfo Dulce near Bosque del Cabo has a great beach with an easy break for people who want to learn to surf. So my son, his friend, me and my brother booked surfing lessons with "Pollo". A family from Bosque del Cabo joined us and everyone had a great time. Highly recommended for kids of any age!

Bosque del Cabo arranged all of these activities, transportation to and from, food and drink, the prices were reasonable and service was excellent.

Service: People are the most important part of any destination. The staff at Bosque del Cabo were friendly, helpful and kind -- from the front desk to the housekeepers. We talked to the owners, Phil and Kim, and saw their commitment to preserving this unique place. It was easy to see why Bosque del Cabo repeatedly won the "Travelers' Choice" award from [TripAdvisor](#).

Eco friendly: "Eco Lodge" is an overused phrase in the travel industry. Bosque del Cabo has a real commitment to protecting the reserve and unique wildlife. Almost all of the casas are solar powered and most of the hot water is solar heated. Phil also installed a micro-hydro generator, a grey water system and full recycling. All of these steps are seamless and invisible, a natural part of the Bosque experience.

A key recommendation: One family we met at Bosque del Cabo said, "We spent our first day in San Jose, then 2 days at Tortuguero, and we leave tomorrow for Arenal." That is typical for visitors from the US; we did the same thing on our first trip, and it was a mistake. Spend more time in one place, where you can get to know the area, the people and the wildlife -- and relax. We spent 9 days at Bosque del Cabo -- our entire vacation -- and were very sad to leave.

In short, Bosque del Cabo is a perfect place for your vacation in Costa Rica -- for a solo trip, a romantic getaway, wedding or a family vacation. We rarely encounter a destination that earns this 'best of' recommendation.

I hope this is helpful.



Mark Hays

If you have any questions, please contact me at: MarkAllenHays@Gmail.com

Photos of Casa Coco at Bosque del Cabo, where we stayed:



Casa Coco from the front



Living room



The fully furnished kitchen



One of two master bedrooms



One of two master baths with dual sinks



Stone lined master bathtub



Private pool and deck