



**Media Contacts:**

Monica Kelly / Ines Cano  
Cheryl Andrews Marketing Communications  
P: 305-444-4033  
[monica@cam-pr.com](mailto:monica@cam-pr.com) / [ines@cam-pr.com](mailto:ines@cam-pr.com)

**EXPERIENCE EASTER WEEK IN COSTA RICA**

*Top five things to do during this spring holiday*

**SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA – Feb. 23, 2016** – As one of the most anticipated and traditional events in Costa Rica, Easter Week (also known as “Semana Santa” or Holy Week) offers travelers the perfect opportunity to learn about the country’s history, traditions and culture. From March 21-27, Costa Rica’s visitors and locals alike can enjoy and participate in the many festivities that take place this week. Whether partaking in a traditional event or simply taking advantage of the beautiful weather, Costa Rica offers family-friendly activities that combine excitement and adventure with comfort and security.

Activities for visitors to enjoy during Easter Week include the following:

**Biblical Reenactments**

Street processions are one of the most important events that take place during Easter Week in Costa Rica. The most popular one is the Passion of Christ, a reenactment of the journey of Christ from his crucifixion up until his resurrection. Hundreds of people across the country walk the streets to participate in this biblical reenactment. The procession provides visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves into the country’s traditions and to appreciate the Costa Ricans’ enthusiasm for these celebrations. One of the most popular processions takes place in San Joaquin de Flores, in the province of Heredia.

**The Big Catch**

In Santa Cruz, one of Costa Rica’s oldest traditions, “La Lagarteadá,” celebrates the combination of Christian and Aztec culture. According to local folklore, Aztecs sacrificed crocodiles during the beginning of spring since they believed crocodiles were symbols of healing and fertility. After the Spanish conquests, synergies between the ritual and the Passion of Christ created the today’s tradition in which townsfolk capture a crocodile on Holy Friday, which is then displayed in the town square and released to the river the following day.

This peaceful and symbolic tradition is strictly supervised by officials from the Environment and Energy Ministry (MINAÉ) and no crocodiles are harmed in the process of this celebration.

**Colorful Ceremony**

Distinguished by the use of long, colorful ribbons, the procession of the Christ of Promises (“Cristo de las Promesas”) is another important event celebrated during Easter Week. Parishioners follow a Christ figure dressed in white, eyes covered with a cloth of the same color and hundreds of colorful ribbons tied around his waist. Each participant walks along while holding a ribbon as a sign of gratitude for granted promises or for pleas.

## **Easter Eats**

Since Catholic tradition calls for the abstinence of meat during the Holy Trinity, Costa Rica's cuisine during this time consists mostly of seafood. Holy Week in Costa Rica is the perfect opportunity to enjoy the abundance of seafood the country's two coasts provide. Visitors can savor delicious ceviche or tasty dishes such as fish soup, fried fish, or rice and shrimp.

In addition, Easter Week is one of the best times to experience the local fare. A staple during this week is to eat turnovers or empanadas filled with "chiverre," a seasonal squash variety that is cooked in butter and sugar until it forms a sweet paste similar to honey. Another must-try traditional dish in Costa Rica during Easter Week is "tamal mudo," a flavorful corn-based dough.

## **Adventure Paradise**

From relaxing on a tropical beach to hiking active volcanoes, Easter Week in Costa Rica is an experience like no other. As most businesses, with the exception of tourist destinations, close on Thursday and Friday during Easter Week, this time is the perfect opportunity to explore all the beautiful sights Costa Rica has to offer. No matter what region travelers choose to visit, one of Costa Rica's 28 national parks awaits nearby.

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## **About Costa Rica**

Costa Rica is located in Central America between Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south; it is bordered on the east by the Caribbean Sea and the west by the Pacific Ocean. With an abundance of unique wildlife, landscapes and climates this small country proudly shelters approximately five percent of the known biodiversity in the world. In order to protect and preserve its wealth of natural resources, Costa Rica has become a global leader in sustainable practices with protected areas comprising 26 percent of its land mass. With a peaceful spirit, emphasis on education and an economy based on tourism, technology and exportation, Costa Rica offers one of the highest standards of living in Latin America. Visitors to Costa Rica enjoy a highly organized tourism infrastructure among a tropical paradise of lush rainforests, mystical volcanoes and cloud forests and beaches that meet mountains filled with monkeys and macaws. Offering a broad terrain of activities and accommodations, visitors to Costa Rica will find a range of hotel options ranging from small beachside bed & breakfasts to authentic intimate boutique mountain lodges to major international business hotel brands and everything in between. Costa Rica's accommodations offer something appealing for everyone's desires. The phrase "Pura Vida" can be heard echoing throughout Costa Rica from coast to coast. Used as a greeting or expression of happiness, the phrase literally translates to "pure life," however its true meaning is "full of life," which accurately describes the adventure and wonder that await visitors.

## **About Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (ICT)**

Established in 1955, the Costa Rica Tourism Board spearheads the vital task of regulating and promoting Costa Rica's extensive of tourism offerings. The ICT and its partners in the private sector work tirelessly to garner recognition, standardize practices, provide insightful research data and foster cultural development for the country's coast to coast one-of-a-kind tourism products and resources.