



## Costa Rica

Hike, Bike, Raft.....and Relax

# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



## ITINERARY

Costa Rica • Hike, Bike, Raft....and Relax

**15 DAYS • 14 NIGHTS**

San Jose – Quepos – Manuel Antonio – Naranjillo – Santa Maria – Pacific Slopes – Orosi Valley – Continental Divide – Humo – Tapanti – Pacuare River – Caribbean Coast – San Jose

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Exhilarating **white water rafting** on the Pacuare River
- **Cycling and trekking** through lush cloud forests in the Central Valley
- Interacting with locals and **supporting local communities.**
- Relaxing for refreshing dips in **waterfalls and rivers**
- **Crossing the Continental Divide** on a bike.

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Adventure
Tour Start / End	San Jose
Accommodation	Hotels, Lodges & Camping
Included Meals	14 Breakfasts, 8 Lunches, 7 Dinners
Group Size	6-12 pax

## COSTA RICA HIKE, BIKE, RAFT, RELAX



This is a wonderfully diverse trip where the activities are as varied as the landscape. You'll start biking from beautifully dramatic Pacific Coast lined by lush tropical rainforest, continue by foot and pedal thorough mystical cloud forests. The exhilaration doesn't let up as we raft on the spectacular white waters of Pacuare river to the palm fringed Caribbean. Phew! Time to relax.



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# COSTA RICA *an overview*

Eco-diversity like no other - Costa Rica encases 500,000 different species which account for roughly 4% of the world's plant, insect and wildlife species. Witness Sloths, Monkeys, Frogs, Snakes, Turtles, Iguanas, Humming Birds and so much more. Wander through tranquil bird-packed cloud forests and rich rainforests brimming with a plethora of spectacular wildlife. As well as its head-turning abundance of wildlife, this Central American paradise is famed for its never-ending activities, making it an adventure-seeker's dream; the vast array of activities widely on offer include Zip-lining, White-Water Rafting and Trekking. The incredibly beautiful east and west shores that run down the sides of Costa Rica display gorgeous paradise beaches lined with jungle, such as the secluded sandy stretches of the laid-back Caribbean coastline and the 'sun and surf' pacific stretches containing some great marine life. Become acquainted with the warm friendly locals, offering huge smiles, an easy-going manner and 'Pura Vida's. Despite receiving a heavy influx of tourists in recent years, there are still some extraordinary hidden gems and quiet spots to be found which will allow the more adventurous of tourists to experience nature, activities and culture that the typical tourists let pass them by.

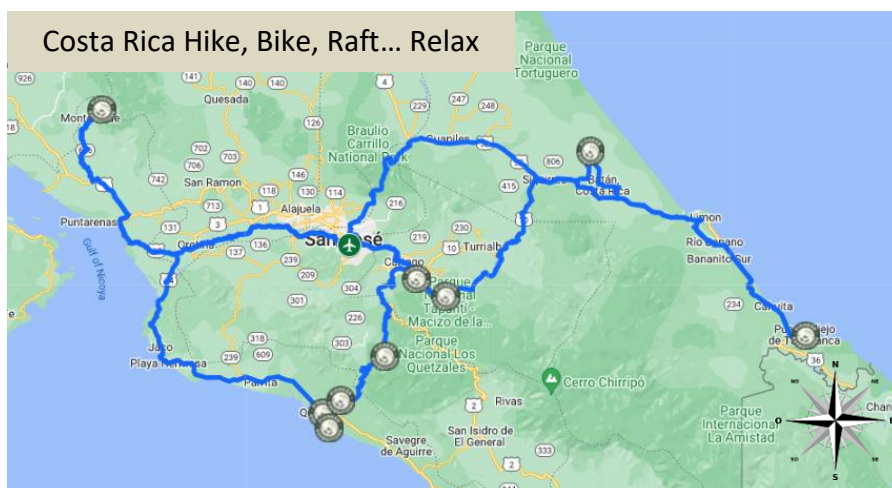
## WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

Pioneer Expeditions are one of the few specialists that really *do* off the beaten track and unique adventures. The team have a real passion for wildlife and adventure travel which we love to share with our clients. We delight in searching the world for new destinations, new experiences and creating the most incredible adventures.

We like to introduce our clients to the unique, the different, and the incredible. Whether it is through wildlife tracking, sea kayaking, snorkelling, trekking, rafting, cycling or observing wildlife in its natural environment, we want to give you the real Pioneer experience.

From the moment you choose to travel with Pioneer Expeditions until you return back home, you are supported by our dedicated team. We listen to what you want and can create an itinerary around your specific needs, working with your budget and with a commitment to responsible travel.

## ITINERARY



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## DAY 1 : Welcome to Costa Rica

Upon arrival in San Jose, you will be met by your tour guide and you will be transferred to your hotel in Sa Jose.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**n/a**



Distance:  
**Airport Transfer**



Activities:  
**Travel**

## DAY 2: Quepos / Warm up day – Manuel Antonio National Park

Today our challenge starts on the Pacific Coast. We leave San José by bus (your last motorized vehicle for the next 10 days) to the fishing village of Quepos, next to Manuel Antonio National Park.

This afternoon you will be able to relax, chill out on the beach or visit the National Park, famous for its abundant wildlife.

We have set aside time before dinner to check out and set up bikes as it is an early start tomorrow morning. The official trip briefing is after dinner this evening. (B, D)



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 4hr drive**



Activity:  
**Transfer / Relaxation**

## DAY 3: Naranjillo – Biking and trekking.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS... We awake early and enjoy a light buffet of fresh fruit and coffee before some photos on the beach and then set off on bikes to climb the steep mountains of the sparsely populated Pacific Coast. The vista from above is your reward for hard work. In the small town of Esquipulas we eat a hearty breakfast, rest up and prepare our day packs for the next leg of the day's journey. Trading our wheels for hiking boots, we continue by trekking into the cool mountains of Central Costa Rica. We camp overnight in the valley of Naranjillo.

**Biking 19km/12mi + Trekking 14km/9mi**



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**33 km**



Activities:  
**Cycling / Trekking**



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## DAY 4: Santa Maria – Pacific slopes

Our day begins with a trek towards the Continental Divide and challenging the infamous “Cemetery Hill” - a strenuous 13 kilometer climb. We then head for the pueblo of San Lorenzo, switching to mountain bikes to reach the quaint village of Santa Maria where we refortify with some typical Costa Rican fare and rest up in comfortable local cabins.

**Trekking 12km/7mi + Biking 14km/9mi**



Overnight:  
**Cabins**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**26 km**



Activities:  
**Trekking / Cycling**

## DAY 5: Orosi Valley – Up and over the Continental Divide

Orosi Valley – Up and over the Continental Divide – Biking 49km/30mi

Today we tackle the hardest, steepest climb of our adventure. The challenge before breakfast is mountain biking a 14-kilometer up-hill stretch to the Continental Divide, bringing us to an altitude of 2,330 meters - the highest peak of our journey. Following the rule that everything that goes up must come down, the remainder of the day is mountain biking at its best - mostly downhill on dirt roads and single-track trails. We finish the afternoon in the beautiful Orosi Valley where rich pastures and dark green forests of coffee carpet the land and we rest for the night in the town of Orosi.

**Biking 49km/30mi**



Overnight:  
**Eco Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, L**



Distance:  
**49 km**



Activities:  
**Cycling**

## DAY 6 : Humo – Through the valley to the Tapanti area

After breakfast, we mountain bike along a river to the Tapantí National Wildlife Refuge. This is an area of vast rugged terrain covered with dense primary rainforest.

Leaving our bikes, we take to the mountains trekking amongst thousands of trees covered with ferns, bromeliads, mosses and other epiphytes... a primary cloud forest ecology. The end of the day finds us on flatter ground, camping near the small settlement of Humo.

**Biking 9km/6mi + Trekking 17km/10.5mi**



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**26km**



Activities:  
**Trekking / Cycling**



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## DAY 7: Pacuare River

After breakfast we continue mountain biking towards the whitewater rafting “put-in” at La Cruz, the upper gateway to the raging Pacuare River. We eat lunch then load up into the rafts to paddle and PADDLE through pristine rainforest, canyon cliffs, spotted with deafening waterfalls. By afternoon we arrive at our comfortable riverside camp, El Nido del Tigre, nestled between the sounds of the rainforest and the hum of the river. You can wander off to explore this lush environment, looking out for toucans and boa constrictors and sloth, or simply relax in a hammock to the sounds of the river.

### Biking 43km/27mi + Rafting 10km/6mi



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, L,D**



Distance:  
**26km**



Activities:  
**Cycling / Rafting**

## DAY 8: Pacuare Valley – Free day in the rainforest - hike to waterfall, play in a rapid, and relax in a hammock

We spend some quality time at this unique location on the banks of the Pacuare River, hiking the hills, exploring primary forest, swimming in the Pacuare, exploring waterfalls and swimming holes with water so pure you can drink it (most of the year). This area of rainforest remains in a very natural state, with minimum disruption to accommodate our guests. El Nido del Tigre is the name of the giant ginger plants carpeting the area around the campsite. It's a very private place, with small numbers of guests, so the sense of purity and nature seep into your dreams at night.



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, L,D**



Distance:  
**26km**



Activities:  
**Nature / Leisure**

## DAY 9: Pacuare River – Rafting

Today the Pacuare takes us through virgin rainforest, cascading waterfalls and river carved canyons. We maneuver through the exhilarating rapids and in gentler sections you can see into the rainforest at the river's edge. Along the way we take time out to do some hiking to spectacular waterfalls and have lunch on the shore. At last, in the late afternoon, we take-out at the beginning of the banana plantations at Finca Pacuarito, then rest for the night..

### Rafting 20km/12m



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, L,D**



Distance:  
**26km**



Activities:  
**Cycling / Rafting**



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## DAY 10: Caribbean Coast

THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS...This morning we jump on our bikes for a short ride through banana plantations to the town of Freeman where we begin the final leg of the traverse in kayaks down the Pacuare leaving the rapids behind as the river eases into the Caribbean lowlands where banana plantations gradually swallow the receding rainforest. The river slows to a tranquil pace as we are rafting the last mile of the river, completing the mosaic of the landscapes we have experienced. At the end of the adventure, we reach the mouth of the Pacuare as it meets the Caribbean Sea, celebrating our passage with bubbly in the surf, while enjoying a well-deserved rest. After some time on the beach we are picked up by a motorboat and transferred to Moin from where we travel by vehicle to the beach.

### Biking 26km/16mi + Kayaking 12km/7mi



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, L**



Distance:  
**26km**



Activities:  
**Cycling / Kayaking**

## DAY 11: Caribbean Coast

This morning we will have a private transfer from Cahuita to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca. Here you will be able to spend the next few days relaxing on this stunning and laid back beach town with a typical Caribbean feel. It has stunning beaches, jungle, and some fun nightlife it gives you a great opportunity to relax. Please note the waters around are for 'hardcore' surfers due to the riptides but safer waters can be found further north if you are looking for snorkelling.

Overnight – Azania Bungalows



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B**



Distance:  
**n/a**



Activities:  
**Relaxing**

## DAY 12 - 13: Caribbean Coast

Free days at leisure to explore the beach and the surround areas.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B**



Distance:  
**n/a**



Activities:  
**Relaxing**



## DAY 14: Caribbean Coast – San Jose

Free morning at your hotel or beach before taking a shuttle transfer to San Jose. Your journey back to San Jose will still give you some great sights as you pass through high cloud forest, misty mountains, deep, steep, river-carved canyons and the spectacular Braulio Carrillo National Park,



*Overnight:*  
**Hotel**



*Meals:*  
**B**



*Distance:*  
**4 hrs**



*Activities:*  
**Relax / Travel**

## DAY 15: End of trip

Private transfer to the airport in time for your flight home.



*Overnight:*  
**n/a**



*Meals:*  
**B**



*Distance:*  
**n/a**



*Activities:*  
**Travel**





# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

## Daily routine

Our days usually start with fresh coffee and breakfast around 6:30. All packed and ready to go for our activity by 8:00. During the day you will have lots of time for pictures, water breaks and enjoying the scenery. The activities will be done at a comfortable pace for everyone, set by the guide. Around mid-day we will stop for lunch at a local restaurant or a picnic lunch made by the guides. The group will finish the day around 3:00 with plenty of time to rest. Dinner is usually served around 7:00 followed by a briefing for the next day.

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ All meals as described (B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D=Dinner)</li><li>■ Accommodation : 5 nights hotel, 5 nights camp, 1 night local cabin</li><li>■ Airport transfers</li><li>■ All transfers</li><li>■ Group equipment (bikes, rafts, camping gear etc)</li><li>■ Support vehicle</li><li>■ Experienced &amp; fun bilingual guides</li><li>■ Vegan or special meals can be included upon request.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ International flights</li><li>➤ Activities not mentioned</li><li>➤ Meals not mentioned</li><li>➤ Additional services requested by guests on site</li></ul>

## D11 Caribbean coast – Free morning / Afternoon transfer back to San Jose

The morning is free to relax around the hotel or on the beach. After lunch we head back to San José, about 4 hours away. You will gasp at the beauty of breathtaking views as we pass through high cloud forest, misty mountains, deep, steep, river-carved canyons, the spectacular Braulio Carrillo National Park. (B)

## D12 Departure

Coast to Coast will pick you up for your trip to the airport. So sad it had to end, so good you got to live it... (B)

oday we visit the Arenal Hanging Bridges for a natural history walk.

This afternoon we will head to the Tabacon Hot Springs.

After an afternoon at the hot springs, we will head out to take some sunset landscape photographs before heading back to our hotel for dinner.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B,D**



Distance:  
**n/a**



Activities:  
**Exploring /Wildlife**



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## DAY 8: 16 Apr: Carara National Park & Punta Leona

Today we head to the Pacific Coast and the beautiful Punta Leona.

We will stop on-route for lunch and will be able to see our first glimpse of the crocodiles on the Tarcoles River from the bridge.

After lunch we head to the Carara National Park.

Carara is one of Costa Rica's most popular National Parks (so prepare for more people). A few of the local animals include Opossum, Two-toed Sloths, Agouti, Armadillo, Pacas, Great Anteater, Kinkajou, Tayra, Margay Cat, Collared Peccary, White-tailed Deer, Poison-arrow Frogs, and the Omnipresent Monkeys.



### **PHOTOGRAPHY**

*By now you will be very well prepared to explore Carara National Park for another dose of wildlife photography. You never quite know what you are going to see, but that is what makes it so exciting, and with your new wildlife photography skills, you will be ready to capture the moment when it happens.*

*Punta Leona beach is quite simply a photographers paradise. You will have the opportunity to further your landscape photography skills, learning about using long exposures creatively to enhance your compositions. Punta Leona's palm trees, beautiful golden sands and interesting rock formations offer plenty of compositional elements to play around with too. As the sun goes down you might find yourself with just Coati for company.*

Hotel Selvamar

<http://www.hotelpuntaleona.com/index.php/en/>



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Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B,L**



Distance:  
**4 hrs drive**



Activities:  
**Exploring /Wildlife**

## DAY 9: 17 Apr: Tamar & the Tarcoles River

Morning taking photos before lunch at Tamar

We will be able to visit the fishing village of Tancoles, before heading onto the Tarcoles River for a sunset boat tour.

We will be able to get close to some of the giant crocodiles who call this river home.



### PHOTOGRAPHY

The abundance of bird life and outrageous size of the crocodiles on the Tarcoles River make for a truly spectacular wildlife photography experience. The focus here is going to be learning how to successfully capture birds in flight. With the river and mangrove scenery being much more open than in the rainforest, this will be our best chance to capture Scarlet Macaws flying side by side. They are actually very generous to photographers, letting out squawks and screams that carry for miles so you always know when they are coming!



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B,L**



Distance:  
**n/a**



Activities:  
**Boat tour**



## DAY 10: 18 Apr: Uvita

Today we head to Uvita.

We will stop at La Parcela for lunch, one of the best seafood restaurants in Costa Rica.

Tonight we will sleep at La Cusinga Lodge. Located on the South Pacific coast of Costa Rica. La Cusinga Eco Lodge offers guests breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean and its sunsets.

Surrounded by tropical forests and deserted beaches where freshwater waterfalls reach the Pacific Ocean in one of the most beautiful tropical areas of the world.

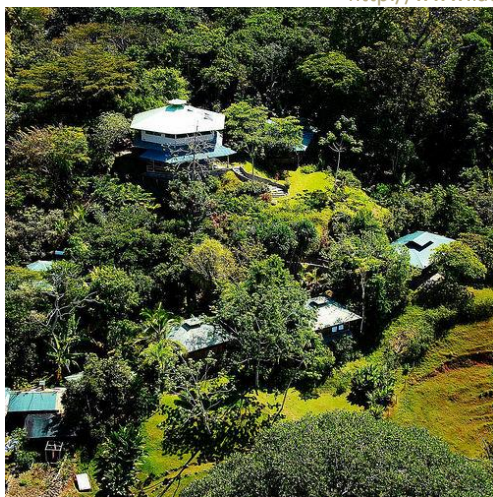
### PHOTOGRAPHY

*Cusinga offer yet more chance for both wildlife and landscape photography. The wide expanse of golden sand is backed by a bank of thick, pristine rainforest meaning the beach is completely isolated and receives virtually no visitors. In one sunrise or sunset shoot, you will have the opportunity to capture the impressive coastal landscape and local wildlife of monkeys and wading birds.*



La Cusinga Lodge

<http://www.lacusingalodge.com/>



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B,L**



Distance:  
**2 ½ hrs Drive**



Activities:  
**Exploring /Wildlife**



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## DAY 11: 19 Apr: Nauyaca Waterfall

Today we will visit the Nauyaca waterfalls.

“These majestic waterfalls are recognized worldwide for their beauty - located in a canyon approximately eighty meters wide. One of the falls is forty-five meters high in free fall and the other twenty meters high in stepped fall, forming at the foot of it, a pool of a thousand square meters and six meters deep.” There are also many other natural pools, which are there to enjoy. We will have lunch there before returning to Cusinga Lodge.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

At Nauyaca Waterfall, you will learn about how to use long exposures effectively in photographing waterfalls and how filters such as polarisers can be used to enhance your images.



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B,L**



Distance:  
**1 hr drive**



Activities:  
**Waterfall visit**

## DAY 12: 20 Apr: San Gerado de Dota



We leave the coast and head to the cloud forest of San Gerado de Dota.

*San Gerado de Dota is a haven for birdwatchers and hikers. Located in the Savegre River Valley, this allows you quick access to Los Quetzales National Park (the home of the Quetzal). This is one of the most beautiful regions of Costa Rica with green mountainous backdrop & dense forests. Apart from the iconic Quetzal, there is a plethora of humming birds and woodpeckers to enjoy, as well as peccaries and coyotes.*

Paraiso Quetzal Lodge

<http://paraisoquetzal.com/en/index.php>



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B,L**



Distance:



Activities:  
**Lunch**



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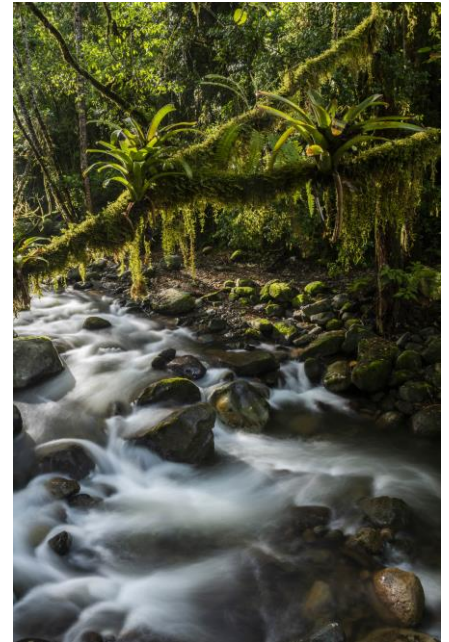
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## PHOTOGRAPHY

Today you will learn various techniques for photographing hummingbirds including using just natural light, a single flash, and how to get creative with flash. As with most locations in Costa Rica, you will also have the chance for both landscape and wildlife photography, perfecting your long exposure skills and capturing images of the abundant birdlife during a walk along the river.



### Paraiso Quetzal Lodge

<http://paraisoquetzal.com/en/index.php>



*Overnight:*  
**Lodge**



*Meals:*  
**B,L**



*Distance:*  
**4 hr drive**



*Activities:*  
**Wildlife**

## DAY 13: 21 Apr: San Gerado - Paraiso Quetzal Lodge

Today we will go in search for the Quetzal, offering you the chance to photograph one of the most beautiful birds in Costa Rica.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

*Following on from what you learned the previous day about photography hummingbirds, you will have the opportunity to capture photos using a multi-flash set up. All equipment will be provided, and the techniques you learn will be applicable to any flash photography going forward.*



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*Overnight:*  
**Lodge**



*Meals:*  
**B,L**



*Distance:*



*Activities:*  
**Explore**

#### **DAY 14: 22 Apr: San Gerado – Savegre Lodge**

The trip will come to an end with another chance to search for the Quetzal - we will head out on a Quetzal hunt, along the road in San Gerado.

We will have lunch at Savegre Lodge, before exploring this area further.



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Savegre Lodge  
<http://www.savegre.com/>



*Overnight:*  
**Hotel**



*Meals:*  
**B,L**



*Distance:*  
**1 hrs Drive**



*Activities:*  
**Exploring /Wildlife**

#### BEACH TRIP EXTENSION TEXT

If you have any energy left then surf lessons can be arranged locally at all levels. Just ask the friendly staff at Azania bungalows.

In addition to the wild life you will have already experienced a snorkelling tour will introduce you to a whole new biome.

Kayaking trips are also available.

For sloth spotting we recommend a wildlife coastal forest walk to see them in their natural habitat.

#### DAY 15: 23 Apr: Airport Transfer

You will get a private transfer to the airport in time for your flight home.



*Overnight:*  
**n/a**



*Meals:*  
**B**



*Distance:*  
**3 hr drive**



*Activities:*  
**Transfer**





## PHOTOGRAPHY

Travel photography is an amalgamation of many different techniques. In order to paint a complete picture of a destination, you need to ensure you capture the details of its quirks, its colours, textures and patterns, its people and its landscapes. This trip will provide you with the camera skills and creative photographic eye that you need in order to do this in any destination. This will ensure you return home from both this trip and future adventures with photos you can print off, frame, hang up on the wall and be proud of.

Please note to take advantage of sunrise VERY early mornings may be necessary. These are usually optional.

## MEET YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDE



### MATTHEW WILLIAMS-ELLIS

Matthew is a documentary, destination and commercial travel photographer, who has been a finalist in Travel Photographer of the Year three years running.

In 2016 Matthew travelled to Madagascar with Pioneer Expeditions to embark on a recce to design this trip.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### INCLUDED

- All meals as described (B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Accommodation as described
- Greeting and meeting at the airport
- Welcome kit
- Private transportation with the group the whole time
- Shared excursions whilst at Tortuguero National Park (not including the lodge based photography excursions)
- Naturalist guide & Photography guide
- Vegetarian or special meals can be included upon request.

### NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Activities not mentioned
- Meals not mentioned
- Additional services requested by guests on site
- Entrance to tortuguero national park & optional additional tours in tortuguero



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# THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

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Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at [info@pioneerexpeditions.com](mailto:info@pioneerexpeditions.com) if you're interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website [www.pioneerexpeditions.com](http://www.pioneerexpeditions.com) to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

**1. Contact us -**

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

**2. Leave everything to us -**

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night's accommodation.

**3. Wait for your adventure to begin -**

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We'll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

