

*Master Gardener  
Costa Rica  
Trip  
2009*

*April 22 - May 3*



# Costa Rica: Master Gardener Paradise

## 12 Days/11 Nights

### Itinerary

Lankester



#### Apr 22

#### Orlando/San José

Upon arrival in San José, we are met and transferred to Casa Conde Hotel located next to Park La Paz. The hotel is five minutes from downtown San José and from the huge and popular Multiplaza Del Este and about half an hour from the airport. This afternoon, if arrival time permits we will visit The Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad. This biological station serves as a scientific institution with a social orientation. Visitors to InBio have the opportunity to learn about Costa Rica's biodiversity as well as important projects developed in the fields of conservation and sustainable use. They also have exhibits on Costa Rica's efforts to conserve its biodiversity through the establishment of protected areas such as national parks and biological reserves.

**Overnight at Casa Conde Hotel (D).**

#### Apr 23

#### San Jose/Cartago/Turrialba

This morning we start with a coffee tour at Café Britt. A professional acting troupe dressed in traditional garb will escort us through a multimedia interactive tour through the history of coffee. On the *finca*, as the plantation is called in Spanish, our day starts on six-acres of coffee fields, tropical gardens and coffee processing facilities. We will be greeted by a breathtaking view from the lookout point with two of Costa Rica's most famous volcanoes on one side and a spectacular panoramic view of the Central Valley on the other. They'll teach us all about coffee cultivation and not just by giving the facts. We can pick a few ripe cherries to taste their sweetness.

From the fields, they'll take us into the roasting and packaging facilities to soak in the aroma of roasting coffee and learn all about this magical process that turns a red coffee cherry into a delicious cup of java.

Then, in the theater, we sit back and watch a multi-media play and presentation of coffee's place in world history. Learn about how deeply coffee culture is woven into the history and people of Costa Rica and be prepared to have a few good laughs while we're at it. Then we start our way out of San Jose towards the south to Lankester Botanical Gardens. Costa Rica has more than 1,400 varieties of orchids, and no fewer than 800 species are on display at this botanical garden in Cartago province. Created in the 1940s by English naturalist Charles Lankester, the gardens are now administered by the University of Costa Rica. The primary goal is to preserve the local flora, with an emphasis on orchids and bromeliads. Paved trails meander from open, sunny gardens into shady forests. In each environment different species of orchids are in bloom. We will then travel towards Turrialba to our hotel. **Overnight at Guayabo Lodge (B,L,D)**

#### **Apr 24 Turialba**

Start the day with Irazú Volcano; a massive stratovolcano more than 500 sq km with at least 10 flank cones on the southern flank, all older than at least 14,000 years when a massive lava flow (the “Ceravantes” flow) erupted. The Irazú Volcano has two main craters, one is called the “Diego de la Haya” crater that contains a strangely colored lake (some days it’s light green and others it’s red) and the other is 300 meters (900 feet) deep. Even the scarce and austere vegetation contributes to the other-worldly feeling of the place. Nevertheless, there are some species of animals that manage to live in this severe and rugged area that includes coyotes, tiger cats, long-tailed weasels and some species of birds like the clay-colored robins. On a clear day we see the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans from the same place. This afternoon we visit C.A.T.I.E. the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center for its unique and internationally recognized botanical collection. Its paths offer excellent conditions for bird watching, and the gardens allow for the study of orchids, herbs, and other tropical species. The botanical garden maintains nearly 5,700 genetic samples that represent more than 350 species from all over the world. The garden offers an incredible variety of tropical fruits to taste, smell, and touch. All the species conserved at the C.A.T.I.E. botanical garden serve to enrich genetic diversity so that scientists, students and the public in general will be made more aware and encouraged to protect these natural resources.

**Overnight at Guayabo Lodge (B,L,D)**

#### **Apr 25 Turialba/Sarapiquí**

After breakfast we travel out of Turialba to Sarapiquí. En route we visit Costa Flores a 120-hectare tropical flower and palm farm. Enjoy a guided tour of the many flowers grown here, including over 120 varieties of colorful *Heliconia*. Stroll along the flat trails surrounded by beautiful gardens, ponds, fountains, small waterfalls, and hummingbirds.

Learn how the flowers and palms are packed for shipment around the world. Continuing with our journey we stop at La Tirimbina Research Center for a Chocolate Tour. We hike across TRC’s popular suspension bridge to a former cacao-tree (*Theobroma cacao*) plantation. During the walk, we will be exposed to the natural and cultural history of the cacao tree, and upon reaching the plantation a TRC guide will reveal the secrets of transforming cacao fruit into chocolate. We’ll see the chocolate-making process firsthand and even have the opportunity to treat our taste buds to organic rainforest chocolate! After the tour, you can visit the TRC gift shop to purchase some organic cacao chocolate bars made by the Asociación de Mujeres Amazilia del Caribe, a group of local women from Pueblo Nuevo de Guácimo, who have seen a way to improve their lives through chocolate.

**Overnight at La Quinta Lodge (B,L,D)**

#### **Apr 26 Sarapiquí**

Our morning tour will take us to La Selva Biological Reserve a naturalist’s paradise. The visual impact is stunning as we cross the rustic bridge and enter into the lush tropical beauty of the botanical garden. You will be surrounded with an incredible display of exotic tropical flowers, palms, bamboo, bananas, and native tree species. The reserve is run by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), and multiple universities share these research facilities. There are around 1,000 tree species found throughout the 3,700 acre (1,500 ha) park as well as 420 documented bird species that soar within the station borders. About half of the mammal species found in Costa Rica and the majority of the butterfly varieties can be observed at La Selva. In the afternoon we’ll visit Heliconia Island, a tiny, five-acre isle created by a split in the Puerto Viejo River that is home to a virtually undiscovered Garden of Eden. A naturalist’s dream and birder’s paradise, Heliconia Island is the site of an enchanting botanical garden. **Overnight at La Quinta Lodge (B,L,D)**

#### **Apr 27 Sarapiquí/Arenal**

Today we are transferred to the northern part of the Central Valley. We will drive through landscapes of exceptional beauty with forests, lagoons, fields of crops, rivers with hot springs, and the most active volcano of Costa Rica: Arenal Volcano. Before taking the road to Arenal we detour to visit La Paz Waterfall Gardens. The park is a celebration of bio-diversity as it is blessed with an altitude ranging from 4,300 feet (1,320 meters) to 5,000 feet (1,540 meters) that provides an ideal climate for both cloud and rainforest to coexist. The trail design,

which includes three kilometers of paved trails and viewing platforms, allows us to experience and photograph the forest and the awesome power of four majestic waterfalls. The garden also includes a hummingbird garden and butterfly observatory. After lunch, we continue to Arenal, named after the Arenal Volcano, which has been continuously active since 1968. Arenal is young as volcanoes go, only about 4,000 years old and relatively small at 5,358 feet. The volcano's eruptions can be an awe-inspiring sight, especially at night. Short periods of inactivity are usually followed by the emission of hot, red rocks that crash down the steep gray slopes of the volcanic cone. The explosive eruptions can plume up to 1,000 feet into the air and can easily be heard more than a mile away. Aside from the majestic volcano, the hotel is surrounded by great natural attractions, such as the Arenal Lake and the wide primary tropical forest areas inhabited by an array of birds, plants, and animals. This evening we are ready for a relaxing visit to Tabacon Hot Springs, fed by the Arenal Volcano. The mineral waters, running at a soothing temperature of 39° C (102 F), flow through exotic tropical gardens, forming cascades and pools.... the perfect setting for an unforgettable experience. **Overnight at Montana de Fuego Lodge.** (B,L,D)

#### **Apr 28                      Arenal/Cano Negro Refuge**

Today we enjoy a day excursion to discover a wetlands area, considered among the richest in wildlife diversity. We will drive through agricultural land to the small city of Los Chiles to board a boat for a 2 1/2-hour floating safari past tropical rain forests and pastures, until we arrive at the marsh. Along the river, we'll discover the great variety of resident and migratory birds, monkeys, iguanas, sloths, turtles, and caimans.

**Overnight at Montana de Fuego Lodge.** (B,L,D)

#### **Apr 29                      Arenal/Monteverde**

This morning we start our journey to the cloud forest realm of Monteverde. We are transferred by bus to Sapo Dorado Hotel.. After lunch we visit the Monteverde Skywalk. The Sky Walk is a complex of suspended bridges affording a spectacular chance to view the flora and fauna of the cloud forest canopy from an "up-in-the-branches" perspective, a new alternative in tourism for nature lovers. These bridges allow the observation of both flora and fauna from the ground floor through the tops of the emergent layer. A total of 3,280 feet of paths are built to offer six suspension bridges for a total of more than 1640 feet in length and over 130 feet in height.

**Overnight at Sapo Dorado Hotel** (B,L,D)

#### **Apr 30                      Monteverde**

After breakfast we venture into the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve for a guided hike. Cloud forests occur near mountain peaks, where rains turn into a continual mist that sustains life. Receiving over three meters of rain annually, the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve is a consistently cool and wet home to an astounding diversity of flora and fauna. From the lush ferns and mosses on the ground, to the dark canopy formed by tall, vine-laden trees, this region is a treasure-trove of natural phenomena. Following our hike we will visit the



Hummingbird Gallery where we see many species of hummingbirds buzzing by and feasting on the feeders placed out to attract them. The afternoon can be spent at leisure, or take an optional adventure activity. Sky Trek a complex with 2 kilometers of cables (11 zip lines), 2.5 kilometers of hiking trail, three suspended bridges, and an eight story canopy observation tower. This secure system of trails and zip lines, in the Monteverde Cloud Forest that offers visitors the opportunity to observe and appreciate the nature from different vantage points. Those who are less adventurous, could visit the Monteverde Orchid Garden. The garden has more than 425 different species of orchids with each species identified with its scientific name. In the collection you can find species that are endemic to Monteverde and a collection of miniature orchids including the smallest one in the world, *Platystele jungermannioides*, which is about the size of a pinhead. **Overnight at Sapo Dorado Hotel (B,L,D)**

### **May 1 Monteverde/Punta Leona**

This morning we will depart Monteverde towards Punta Leona located at the Central Pacific Coast. Punta Leona has one of the most important private reserves in Costa Rica's Pacific zone, principally because of its geographic location and conservation plan. This refuge was created 27 years ago and consists of 300 hectares (750 acres) of primary and secondary forest. The reserve is of great importance from a biological standpoint because it is one of the few remaining forests in the transitional life zone between the dry forest of the northwest and the rainforest of the southwest. During the last two decades, Punta Leona's reserve has functioned primarily as a center for research on mammals and birds, specifically the conservation program introduced for scarlet macaws that has received national attention. This afternoon we will walk through one of their well-designed trails to learn about the flora and fauna of the area. **Overnight at Punta Leona Hotel (B,L,D)**

Punta Leona



### **May 2 Punta Leona**

Today we visit Turu Ba Ri a 650-acre eco-adventure park with a serious commitment to sustainable tourism. We will access the park by using the Turu Ba Ri Sky Ride, which is an aerial tramway over the forest. This venue offers many unique activities: butterfly garden, ecological trails with centenarian old trees, orchid nursery, herbarium, cactus and palm collections, bromeliad gardens, bamboo area, and countryside farm. Every activity was designed with the most rigorous safety and quality guidelines. Return to hotel. Balance of the day will be spent at leisure. **Overnight at Punta Leona Hotel (B,L,D)**

**May 3 San Jose/Departure**

Early departure to San Jose Airport. En route we visit Else Kientzler Botanical Garden; home to over 2,000 plants from all over the world. It is located on 7 hectares at Sarchi Norte, nestled at the skirts of the Poas Volcano in the Central Valley. You can find several types of gardens that were designed in an attractive way for the visitor. You will see hibiscus, heliconias, succulents and bromeliads as well as a specialized garden for blind people where one can enjoy the plants through textures, sounds, scents and flavors. In addition, there is a sample of timber trees in danger of extinction like the cocobolo (*Dalbergia retusa*), zebrawood (*Astronium graveolens*) and cristobal (*Platymiscium parvifolium*). We continue to the airport to take our flight back to Orlando.

(B)

(Meals: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)

PRICE PER PERSON:	
Double	\$2650.00
Single supplement	\$ 640.00

**Program Includes:**

- English-speaking guide throughout the trip
- Private air-conditioned coach and driver
- 11 nights accomodation incl. taxes
- 11 breakfasts, 10 lunches, and 11 dinners
- Tips to guide, driver, bellboys, and maid at all hotels
- Scheduled tours and entrance fees

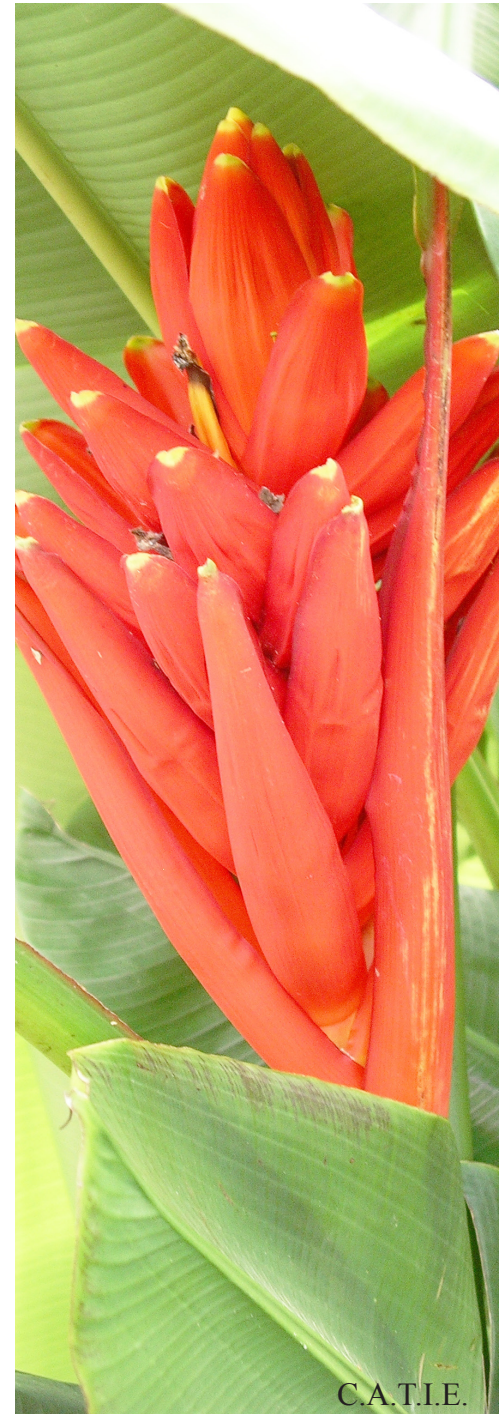
**Program Does Not Include:**

- International air
- Departure taxes \$26.00
- Meals not specified
- Optional tours
- Expenses of personal nature
- Travel insurance

**For photos and links to the places we will go:**

Visit the Garden Tours section  
of

**<http://mastergardener.ifas.ufl.edu>**



## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

### FOR RESERVATIONS

A non refundable deposit of **\$400.00** per person is required to confirm a booking; this deposit will be applied to the total cost of the trip. **DUE October 31, 2008**

**Final payment is due no later than 45 days prior to departure.** Reservation within forty five days of the scheduled departure date requires payment in full. Payment can be done by check or credit card (Visa & Master Card). After final payment no refund is available.

### INSURANCE:

Insurance is **STRONGLY** recommended in order to cover expenses for non-refundable unused services in case of missed connections or delayed flights or other means of transportation due to weather conditions or acts of God or other eventualities outlined in the responsibility clause.

Make sure your health coverage is valid for travel abroad. If not, you should include it when you purchase your travel insurance.

Most trip insurance policies waive pre-existing conditions when it is purchased within 15 days of the initial payment of your trip.

**\*Prices are subject to change without notice, due to fuel increase. After deposit is received, price is guaranteed.**

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** CAPRICE TOURS. Its affiliates and cooperating airlines and agencies act only as agents in matters of transportation and tour operation, and shall not be liable for any injury, damage, delay, mishap, inconvenience, accidents or irregularity of any kind whatsoever resulting entirely or in part for the default of others or from causes beyond our control.

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10923 NW 34 PL  
Gainesville, FL 32606  
1-888-232-4125  
352-331-4145

