

Costa Rica Adventures by Disney: The Vacation of a Lifetime

by Marley Braun, PassPorter Guest Contributor

If you are like me, you are the vacation planner of the family. You comb through travel articles, surf the web for other traveler's advice, and you know every minute detail of your vacation before your family ever packs their suitcases (and let's admit, you probably pack those as well).

If the above describes you, I have a secret to let you in on. There is a way to have a vacation of a lifetime and not plan a single detail. You just show up and they take care of the rest. You won't even have to research a thing, entertain your children, or worry about your next meal if you don't want to. You can just relax. That is how you will feel if you go on an Adventure by Disney tour. They are first class all the way and you can leave all your planning and worries at home and just enjoy your vacation.

[Adventures by Disney](#) offers guided trips throughout the world. Whether you choose to saddle up in Wyoming or brave the jungles in Africa, Adventures by Disney will take care of every moment and you can just sit back and enjoy the view.

My family was fortunate enough to win an Adventure by Disney to Costa Rica this summer. From the moment we arrived at the San Jose airport, I did not have to plan a single detail of our vacation. Our two guides for the week were Michael and Fico. They helped us settle into our hotel and filled us in on our upcoming adventure.

Our first there days were spent in Arenal, which was a two hour bus ride from San Jose. On the way there, we stopped at the beautiful La Paz Waterfall and Butterfly Gardens. We took an easy hike to the bottom of a very refreshing waterfall and then wandered around the world's largest butterfly garden.

Our tour bus arrived at the Hotel Arenal Kioro just in time to take in a quick sunset view of the volcano before it disappeared into the mist. To say this hotel is spectacular would be an understatement. It is by far the nicest hotel at which any of us had ever stayed. The view from the room was phenomenal. You could practically reach out and touch the volcano from your balcony! After a leisurely buffet breakfast overlooking the volcano the next morning, we headed out for our biggest adventure of the trip, a zipline tour! I am very afraid of heights, so trust me when I say, if I can do it, anyone can. You are literally hanging hundreds of feet

up in the air, flying over the rainforest from platform to platform. After a mini test ride to make sure you really want to go careening through the jungle, you are off! Children must be at least eight years old to zipline. They are able to ride tandem with an adult if that makes them (or you) feel more comfortable. For children younger than eight or adults who choose not to take the zipline, a very pleasant, slow gondola ride is waiting to take you back down through the rainforest.

After our adrenaline rush wore off, we spent a quiet afternoon with local artisans painting souvenirs and then winding down at the nearby Hidalgo Hot Springs. The hot springs are actually heated by the volcano and it had to be one of the most surreal places I have ever been. Words really can't describe it but if I had to pick a few: secluded, misty, otherworldly, pure bliss. There were at least five different pools, at various temperatures. It was the perfect ending to a very adventurous day.

Our last day in Arenal started off at the Corsicana Pineapple Plantation. This might not sound as exciting as ziplining through the rainforest, but our entire group had a fantastic time there. Our guide, nicknamed the Pineapple Slayer, would just snatch the pineapples up from the field, and after a few quick slices from his machete we were presented with the best pineapple we had ever tasted. The tour was not only educational, but the kids (as well as the adults) had a blast watching the Pineapple Slayer in action.

After gorging ourselves on pineapple, we headed to the Rio Sarapiquí to burn off some of those calories. We had never been whitewater rafting before and here we were preparing to go down Class II and III rapids. We were a bit hesitant, but hey, we survived ziplining didn't we? The whitewater rafting turned out to be a lot of fun. Under the supervision of our trusty guide, there was a lot of laughing, splashing, and teamwork involved in the hour that we braved the rapids. From the rapids, we also had great views of sloths hanging from the trees above us.

Our last two days were spent unwinding at the beach. We arrived there in style in our own private plane. The plane ride itself was enough adventure for me for one day (did I mention I'm afraid of heights?), so I was happy to spend the rest of the day being pampered at the local beach.

Our last day was spent exploring Manuel Antonio National Park. As we hiked through the park, our guides pointed out monkeys, sloths, deer, and all sorts of other creatures that were roaming free around us. Our hike ended at a beautiful cove where the water was calm and the howler

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monkeys and iguana kept you on your toes. They were everywhere! Several monkeys were brave enough to hop down on unattended blankets and see what they could "borrow" for the day.

Overall, it was definitely a vacation of a lifetime. I have been to almost all of the Disney resorts and on several Disney cruises, and by far, Adventures by Disney is a notch above the rest. If you really want to treat yourself and your family, I highly recommend booking a Disney Adventure. It will truly make you feel like Disney royalty!

About The Author: Marley Braun is a stay at home Mom who enjoys traveling, tennis and writing in her spare time. Marley is a previous contributor to PassPorter News. Her article on Bicycling through Vermont appeared in the [August 7, 2008 issue](#).

Article last updated: 9/25/2008

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