

# Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica | The Best Family Eco Lodge + Full Trip Itinerary

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January 23, 2018 by [Jennifer Fontaine](#) [4 Comments](#)



Sunset on Drake Bay, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica [Photo courtesy Brandon Rosenblum]

by Jenny Wisniewski – My boys were born seven years apart. While in DC a few years back, one was enjoying the [museums and monuments](#) while the other didn't make it much farther than the zoo. And while one was having the time of his life at Disney, the other was simply putting up with it. Now with our boys at ages 17 and 10, we were all at a stage where we wanted something authentic, adventurous, and off the beaten path. We found it in Drake Bay on the Osa Peninsula in [Costa Rica](#).

## A Journey to the Remote Osa Peninsula

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From the San Jose airport in Alajuela, we boarded our 16-seat plane to the far southwest corner of Costa Rica, not far from the border with [Panama](#). This is the last time we would see paved roads until returning to central Costa Rica five days later.

With the diesel smell and jarring passage, the flight on Nature Air was not for the weak of stomach, but its 30-minute route beat the eight-hour alternative car ride. The views of verdant mountains quickly gave way to the runway carved out of the jungle, a wee bit wider than the plane itself. At its base stood a gray horse nonchalantly grazing as our metal bird glided over its head before coming to a tipsy rest.



The view from the deck at Hotel Jinetes de Osa

We were transported by jeep to a village named Drake Bay on winding roads and at times through flowing streams of water. Upon arrival, our driver pulled over at the side of the road next to a beach, and pointing across the bay, told us in Spanish that our hotel was over yonder. Fortunately, two hotel employees appeared to sling our bags over their shoulders as we started our hike.



Cozy Hotel Jinetes de Osa accommodations

[Hotel Jinetes de Osa](#) was charming. Our cabana was in the treetops surrounded by tropical birds and overlooking the bay ringed in by a line of mountains. (This did require climbing 150 steps every time we wanted to reach it.) Each morning, we ate from a complimentary breakfast buffet in the open air restaurant with scarlet macaws crooning in a tree beside us. Two local women cooked omelets or eggs made to order on burners next to us. The buffet also included fresh, local mangoes, papayas and watermelon and homemade bread or muffins. I was willing to trade the daily climbs for the quaint and cozy surroundings and the delicious fresh food.

**Pro Tip:** [Book Hotel Jinetes de Osa on Booking.com](#). They guarantee the best prices and no booking fees (yes, please!).

## An Osa Peninsula Jungle Hike

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We began our planned hiking excursion with a guided boat ride to La Sirena Ranger and Biological Station, one of two beach landings in the 100,000 acre [Corcovado National Park](#). This lush, biologically diverse chunk of land is a remote piece of what is known as the Osa Peninsula . (The Osa Peninsula also includes Drake Bay.) In 1974 the Costa Rican government reclaimed the land which was at the time being used for agriculture and turned it into a natural preserve. What a difference 40 years can make – the dense tropical jungle is now home to 2% of the world's [biodiversity](#).



Giant tree roots at Corcovado National Park, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica [Photo courtesy Brandon Rosenblum]

This care for the natural environment is evident in the Costa Rican national slogan, “Pura Vida” or pure life. And our trip to Corcovado, was just that – a trip into the jungle to see more creatures than I ever could have imagined, living the pura vida. Our guide, Manuel, led us along the winding trails with a high resolution magnifying lens on a tripod slung over his shoulder.

Manuel would stand aside the trail with his ear to the tree canopy. When something unknown to the rest of us would capture his attention, he would stealthily study the canopy, quickly drop his tripod in place, and jump out of the way so that we hikers could share the sighting. Unbelievably, a two-toed sloth would come into perfect view. And a three-toed sloth. Spider, capuchin, and titi monkeys. Two tapirs. A large group of wild pigs.



A sloth hangs out in the jungle.

Memorably, it was my son, Ryan, not Manuel, who spotted the elusive toucan on this animal kingdom scavenger hunt. At one point, three hiking groups converged on the trail as Manuel caught a glimpse of the yellow and black wonder before the bird surreptitiously escaped to the dense canopy.

Silently scanning the treetops for several minutes, Ryan, jumped up, pointing to a distant branch. The guides looked doubtful as they followed his pointer with their eyes. Then, springing into action, one of them whisper-yelled, “Mira! Mira!” Tripods suddenly hit the ground, hikers rushed towards their guides and lenses brought the lovely bird into view. My ten-year-old gleefully learned that day that though he knows but a little bird call and even less Spanish, the fist pump is universal.



An electric Tucan makes some noise

It was the coconuts that captured Will's fancy. Taking a rest on the beach, Will and Ryan poked around among the detritus. Finding an unblemished coconut, Will next searched for a sharp rock and then went to work.

Miraculously, he did not break fingers or draw blood, but efficiently broke open the coconut husk and next the shell. My husband, John, our Guatemalan group buddy, and I all laughed in wonder. After Will drank the milk straight from the shell, we sat on a piece of driftwood and feasted on the fresh meat.

After hiking for four hours, we finished our adventure by boat and were surprised by a visit from a pod of young dolphins. In synchronicity, they dove and played beside our boat, seeming to perform for us. Manuel pointed out the spots on their backs, signs that they were juveniles. Social, intelligent creatures, they frolicked alongside the boat. Twenty-two marine mammals live in the waters aside Costa Rica. The dolphins alone were worth the trip.

## **Snorkeling Osa Peninsula's Cano Island**

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It was a 45-minute boat ride to Cano Island, known for its crystalline waters. As we swam near the coral, there was much to see, and our skilled snorkeling guide knew exactly where to take us. Clownfish, pufferfish, parrot fish, angelfish, needlefish, and anemones were among the many varieties of life in these turquoise blue waters.



Snorkeling the vibrant turquoise waters of Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica

At one point, a giant school of silver fish swam beneath me. I felt their undulation though it was the fish who were undulating and me who was still. I had become a wave for a few brief moments. Why hadn't we tried this snorkeling thing before?

At one point, Giovanni urgently waved us over and pointed. Feeling his excitement we huddled around him, our eyes searching for his find. Out of the coral swam a white-tipped reef shark, about three feet in length. The biggest find, though, was yet to come. Giovanni led us to a spot where he knew a female sea turtle to sleep. Sure enough, we watched her swim to the surface before slowly descending back down to her resting spot. Beautiful.

## **Farewell, Osa Peninsula**

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Over five days we had discovered iguanas, tapirs and dolphins. It was the scarlet macaws that I loved the most. From our hotel room balcony, we spotted them soaring from treetop to treetop. Their magnificent primary colors, large size and loud, screeching calls enraptured me.



The morning of our departure, as we crossed the beach, barefoot and sun ripened, and headed out of town, a group of six scarlet macaws fittingly guided us, soaring above and cawing in unison, their vibrancy streaked across the bright blue sky.



Jenny Wisniewski is an educator, freelance writer and mom. Her busy home includes two sons, a golden doodle and a cat. She resides in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

## Comments

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