

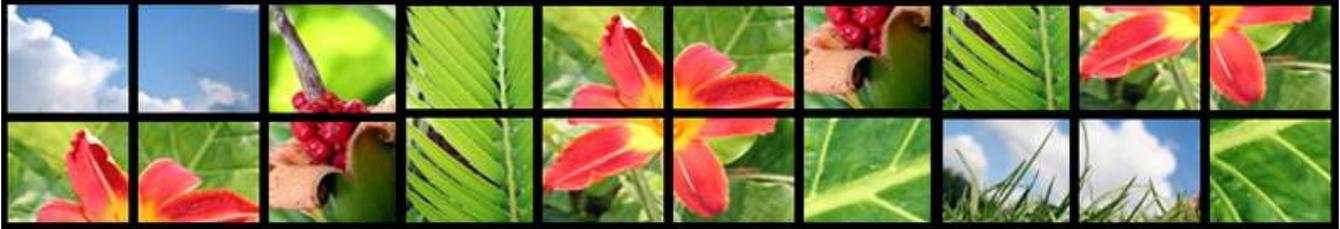
THE VILLA HERMOSA, COSTA RICA

Driving Tips for Costa Rica

There are several things to note in Costa Rica when driving.

1. Gas stations are few and far between so don't let your tank get below $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tank...you don't want to get stranded!
2. Whenever possible, plan your trip to drive while it's light out. Driving in the dark here is difficult because of the lack of signs, lighting and the possibility of animals in the roads. This doesn't mean you shouldn't drive around town, to restaurants, etc but for long trips I'd suggest doing that when you have sunlight.
3. Freeway signs are present in and around San Jose but are sparse once you get away from the big city. We recommend that if you choose to drive around the country on your own that you rent two things: 1) GPS and 2) Cell phone (if yours doesn't work here). We still use our GPS when going to places we are not familiar with and I'm telling you we would have been lost 100x more if we didn't have it. Also, having a phone so you can call where you're trying to get to is SUPER helpful since many places here do not have "typical" addresses! Note that most hotels will not be on the GPS so the best way is to either get the GPS coordinates from the place you're going or look for the Iglesia, Policia or Parque in the city you're driving to.
4. Regarding cell phones, it is illegal to talk on your cell phone while driving. You'll notice sometimes a person is stopped in the middle of a road...it's because he's talking on his phone! The fine for talking & driving is currently about \$250 USD!
5. Keep your eyes on the road...always! The reason people say that the roads are dangerous in CR is because there is no emergency lane and the roads are not very wide to begin with. So please pay attention at all times.





6. There are many animals around and in the countryside so it's not uncommon to have a cow in the road, a man on horseback or several of each! Just assume around every corner that there is a cow, iguana or even a sloth the road and drive slow and keep your eyes on the road. Also, many people have mentioned about driving on the "wrong side of the road" out here. The reason is, you drive on whatever side has less potholes, less bumps, etc. Just make sure that when you're coming up to a crest or a corner (where you have no visibility) that you get back on the "right" side.

7. You'll notice signs like the one to the right. What this means is that the road up ahead only has room for ONE car to pass at a time (whether it be a narrow bridge or just a skinny road). If you can see this sign facing you than it means



STOP AND GIVE THE RIGHT AWAY TO THOSE COMING THE OTHER DIRECTION. If you do not see this sign (look for the back of it when coming to a narrow area), that means that YOU have the right of way and they are supposed to stop for you.

8. Another sign you need to know is this one: **NO HAY PASO!** This means DO NOT ENTER-this is basically telling you it's a one-way street and you cannot enter from where you are...this is an important sign to know!

9. A sign that says **PUENTE ANGOSTO** means there is a bridge ahead and the road NARROWS. There should be a CEDA EL PASO on one of the sides but this is not always the case. Just slow down and pass when it's clear to do so.



10. The country uses orange construction signs just like in the US and many other countries. When you see them slow down as they may be either stopping traffic or asking you to slow down because men are working in the street. If you are stopped, waiting for them to wave you through, if you are the LAST car in that procession, they



may ask you to roll down your window. What they're doing is they want to give you a red flag that you hand to the guy on the other side of the 1-way lane they've created because of the construction. This is totally normal so participate with a smile!

11. You will see a blue & white sign (right) with the town's name every time you enter a new town. This is a great way to make sure you're going the right way if you're using a map or written directions. It's also good if you're taking photos so you can write down where you actually took a photo.

12. There are TOLL collections around the big cities but they're not much. The prices are posted before you get up to the window. Try to keep 1,000 bill or coins with you for these tolls.



13. Speed limit signs are few and far between, sometimes they've painted the KPH on the road itself. Whatever it is try to go the speed limit or else you could get stopped and fined. Out in the country we've found it to be about 80KPH, closer to towns 40KPH and by schools 25KPH. Many areas around schools have speed bumps (some are painted a different color so they're easier to see...some are not).

14. Traffic lights are uncommon in the countryside but you'll find some in San Jose, Quesada, and other larger towns. Some things to note about the lights here as they are different:

- a. Green lights are not usually used...if the light has no colors at all, it is safe to go (assume it means it's green).
- b. The light will start to flash either green or green & yellow to let you know the light is about to change to red and stop traffic.
- c. There are some flashing red lights which are always on at many busy intersections; this just means to slow down, look at the signs around you (on the ground or signs on the posts to see who has the right of way) and proceed with caution.