

**Costa Rica**  
**March 3 - 13, 2026**  
**Road Scholar**  
**With Janet and Bill Berger**

Tuesday, March 3 - Fly to San Jose

Up at 2:30 am after, at best, a fitful night of sleep. Get out of the house a little after 3:30 and to the airport parking lot by 4:00. Check in (Randy is pulling his big suitcase with his bum leg) and get through security without a problem. Get some breakfast sandwiches at Wendy's and walk to the gate. Find Janet and Bill there.

Fly to Miami without a hitch. Getting off of the plane was another story. Randy's leg hurts tremendously and he gets dizzy walking down the airplane aisle. Gate agent calls for a wheelchair and Randy rides to the next gate. Janet and Bill have an earlier flight and rush off. After a bit, we decide to go to the bathroom (Randy is still a bit dizzy, but he makes it) and then go next door to get something to eat. We both order a burger and neither of us can eat more than half (Jan because the burger is too big and Randy because of his queasy stomach). Get an airport transport cart to take us to a new gate and we board. The flight to San Jose is uneventful. Randy has recovered by the time we disembark. Long walk to passport control. We get in the much shorter disabilities line. Randy is still standing by the time we get to the agent. Our luggage is already out when we get to the luggage carousel. The Road Scholar greeter grabs us as we exit baggage claim (after walking through the duty-free shops). We wait for the others on our plane and are then driven into the city to the hotel. The traffic is very dense. Get checked in and go to the room. Rest until our first activity.

Got to orientation and then to dinner. Have a choice of four entrees.

Wednesday, March 4

Luggage out by 8:00 and overview lecture of Costa Rica at the same time. We get our luggage out by 7:00 and go down for some breakfast. Get our meal with little time to spare before the lecture, but we make it. Walk a block and a half to get to the Gold Museum. Very nice artifacts (a lot of gold but many other things too; gold is mainly alloyed) but we take very bad pictures. Go around the corner to the National Theater. Very French style building completed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main floor the theater can be elevated to make it level with the stage instead of sloped. This allowed the space to be used for parties instead of theater productions. Very ornate interior. Statues and paintings were imported from Europe.

Get on the bus. Same dense traffic getting out of town as coming in. A little way out of town we stop at a local restaurant for lunch. Get back on the bus and go downhill to the Caribbean lowlands. Get to lodge and get our suitcases into the room. Have a drink on

the patio (with Janet and Bill joining us at the end). See a scarlet rumped tanager. Talk with a man who has been photographing it all afternoon.

Get tomorrow's schedule and go to dinner. See "sucker-footed" bats hanging from the beams in the ceiling.

Thursday, March 5

Skip optional bird walk at 6:00 in the morning. Get breakfast about 8:00 and find out that most of the rest of the crew had already eaten. Join in for a "grounds walk." Find a two-toed sloth with her baby, green and red poison dart frogs (Jan saw the latter, Randy did not) and a green iguana. Come back and go to leaf cutter ants exhibit. A local had set up an area with vines that lead from a leafy area to an ant colony and had the ants transporting the leaves along the vines. The tops of the colonies were plastic such that we could see inside and see how the ants were growing the fungus to feed the colony. The owner took out the queen for us and showed us her difference in size.

Went back to the lodge for lunch and some downtime. Go to a local home for a cooking demonstration and tasting. We make pineapple marmalade and empenadas which we sample and are shown how they produce pepper and gather honey (made by stingless bees). They have a number of bird feeders which attract a large number of humming birds and a number of larger birds. We see the tanager again along with a streaked back oriole and a blue-grey tanager among others. Get to see the inside of the family's house before we leave.

Go back to the lodge for a short rest. Then go to the main lodge for a drink. See a toucan up in the tree, but the sun was behind it so that we could not see its coloration and determine its type. Have a lecture on the tropical rain forests, have dinner, and go to room.

Friday, March 6

Start the day off with a boat ride up the Sarapiquí River. We are out looking for caimans but don't find any. Do see some holler monkeys and another two-toed sloth (way up in a tree and obscured by the vegetation). Also see snowy egrets, a tiger heron, and an anhinga among others.

Next was a trip to a hearts of palm plantation. We got a demonstration on how the hearts of palm are collected and processed. The palm trees are two years old when they are harvested (cut down). Only about 12"-18" in the center core near the root is used. We eat lunch at the plantation with dishes featuring the hearts of palm.

Go back to the lodge and then to "Dave and Dave's", a former farm that is being replanted as a tropical rain forest. They have set up multiple feeders to attract multiple bird species. We enjoy their comings and goings.

Back to the lodge for dinner and bed.

### Saturday, March 7 - Travel Day

Leave the hotel after breakfast. Drive to a pineapple plantation. We are greeted by the plantation guide and treated to a wonderful pina colada. Take a tractor ride around the plantation going first to a field with four sections. The first was a field that had just been harvested and the second, third and fourth were fields that would be harvested in one, two and three weeks. Then on to a field where they were getting second growth pineapples. The plants will continue to produce pineapples after they were first harvested, but they are smaller. After two harvestings, the plants are plowed into the ground and a legume is planted. The field then lies fallow for two years and the cycle starts over. We tasted some of the fresh picked pineapples and they were very sweet. We had lunch at the farm.

We drive to La Fortuna in the central region of the country. We can see the volcano that we will be visiting tomorrow, but the top is cloud covered. Our guides say that this is the case about 80% of the time.

Check into the lodge and get a very nice room with a spectacular bathroom. Go to the pool for drinks and then have a lecture on the rain forests. Take shuttle bus to a buffet dinner in the hotel grounds. Don't see the caiman in the pond by the dining hall.

### Sunday, March 8 - Arenal Volcano Day



Drive to the 1968 park and observe the side of the volcano where the 1968 eruption occurred. See a few orchids on the observation hill (one is a slipper). Drive over to the observatory and go through its very small museum. Go across the street to a restaurant for lunch. The building had large windows with a beautiful view of the volcano. During lunch, the clouds clear and we see two peaks at the top of the volcano. It's hard to tell, but it looks like one of the cones is still spewing steam. However, it may have just been the wind blowing clouds over the top. The claim is that the volcano has been inactive since 2010. Spend time on the deck outside the restaurant watching the birds come to the fruit feeder there. A family of coati comes by to check out the droppings. Jan goes on the walk through the rain forest. Randy stays behind because of his leg. We meet at the bus and come back to the lodge. Rest until happy hour. Get drinks by the pool and take the shuttle bus to dinner. Eat too much. Back to the room to journal, play games, and head for bed.

### Monday, March 9

After breakfast, we go to a local farm where we see two women dancing traditional dances. We go to a dining area and pound out tortillas that are then cooked for us on a

wood burning stove. Have lunch there including the tortillas. Have a demonstration of pressing sugar cane to get the syrup and taste a glass of sugar cane liquor. Drive back to town stopping on the way at main square in La Fortuna. We are given a chance to walk around the business district (it is hot). Jan and Randy get an ice cream at a local shop. Go back to hotel. Randy goes swimming in the heated pool as Jan watches. Have our happy hour there. Dinner and pack-up for the drive to the west coast tomorrow.

#### Tuesday, March 10

Drive west after breakfast. Have lunch en route. Cross over bridge where we saw all of the crocodiles on our last trip here twenty-three years ago. Bridge is under construction. They are building pedestrian walkways along the side, an amenity that we didn't have the last time. Go on to Carara National Park and take the hike along the short loop trail. See white faced monkeys along trail. Then on to the hotel. There are a couple of macaws in a dead palm at the end of the walkway behind the rooms. The hotel is just big enough for our group and does not have much of a staff. We try to get drinks before dinner, but the "bar tender" is young and inexperienced. We finally get them. Dinner is at a long table outside under cover.

#### Wednesday, March 11

After breakfast we hop on the bus and go to the Pacific coast. Get into an outrigger, paddle along the coast around a rocky outcrop, and land at a very pleasant beach. Guides set up some chairs in the shade. Have lunch and swim in the warm ocean (Randy does, Jan stays back). Paddle around another rocky outcrop and land on a hotel's beach (tour company had to get permission to use this beach - waves were too high to return to original beach). Bus back to the initial cast off point to change clothes and then back to the hotel. Meet everyone at a local bar for drinks. Randy and Jan walk (and Randy makes it on his bum leg). Beautiful sunset.

#### Thursday, March 12 - Crocodile River trip and back to San Jose

Start the morning with a river trip down and up the Tarcoles River (this is the same river we saw the crocodiles from the bridge on the previous trip). The guides seem to have named all of the older crocodiles and point them out to us. There are a number of younger, smaller crocodiles also. Plus, plenty of sea and wet-land birds. See roseate spoonbills in the trees. Pelicans, egrets, and gulls. Eat lunch on shore at the starting pavillion and shop the gift shop a bit. Then onto the bus for San Jose. Our hotel is closer to the airport this time.

#### Friday, March 13 - Going home

Have a rather "liesurely" morning. Have to catch the van to the airport at 9:00. Get there in good order with a lot of support for Randy from his crutch. The airlines have arranged a wheelchair for Randy and that is a help. Get a wheelchair in Miami that takes us on the rather long walk to our new gate. Grab some dinner in a kiosk right near the

gate. Jan gets slightly lost on the way back from the bathroom. The plane is late. Randy hobbles to the plane but both of us make it without a wheelchair. Get in late to Cincinnati. We forego the wheelchair and walk (hobble) to baggage claim. Our bags are already there when we finally make it. Slowly get to the parking shuttle. The driver is very helpful getting our bags on and off the bus. Get home after midnight (adding one more day to the trip).