

# Little Costa Rica is big on wildlife

Central America is a wild place to visit.

Costa Rica is smaller than West Virginia, but it has greater biodiversity than Europe or North America.

Costa Rica is located between North and South America. Plants and animals from both continents and the Caribbean islands thrive there.

Costa Rica has both tropical and subtropical climates. Dry season runs from December to April. Rainy season is May to November.

The Atlantic and Pacific coastal plains are separated by rugged mountains. It is cooler in the highlands. The small country includes lowland rain forest, cloud forests, tropical lakes and rivers.

Costa Rica has occasional earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, landslides and active volcanoes.

About four million people live in Costa Rica. The official language is Spanish but some speak English.

The economy depends on tourism, agriculture and electronics exports. Agriculture products include coffee, pineapples, bananas, sugar, corn, rice, beans, potatoes, beef and timber. Local industries make mi-

croprocessors, medical equipment, food products, textiles and clothing, construction materials, fertilizer and plastic products.

Costa Rica's ecological policy has protected a large percentage of its natural territory. Ecotourism is now a major business in Costa Rica.

Tourists can visit the cloud forests and get a treetop view from hanging bridges and sky trams.

Costa Rica has over 9,000 species of vascular plants. (Vascular plants have roots, stems and leaves.)

Native plants include about 900 different species of trees and 1,500 species of orchids. Most of the world's orchids come from Costa Rica.

The tiny country is also a favorite location for naturalists to study birds. More than 850 species have been identified, including 50 species of hummingbirds alone.

One of the most beautiful birds is the resplendent quetzal. It has a shimmering green plumage, scarlet belly and white tail feathers. Green tail streamers trail over two foot behind its body. Another spectacular bird is the scarlet macaw (pictured).

Next time the Kid will visit two endangered species in Costa Rica, the harpy eagle and the jaguar.



Photos courtesy Costa Rica Tourist Board, photographer Juan Amighetti

## Scrambled Nations

Unscramble these names of countries:

T I E D U N   A T T E S S      N A C H I

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S T O C A   A R C I      A I S P N

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**Newspaper in Education activity**

- Clip this Kid and place it in your journal or scrapbook.
- Find Costa Rica on a map.
- Search through your newspaper for words that you could use to tell someone how to protect endangered species.