

Costa Rica's National Park system began in the 1960's in an effort to preserve the tremendous plant and animal diversity of the nation's tropical forests. Many visitors to the parks are drawn to the over 850 species of birds found throughout the country. There are over 200 mammal species, over 35,000 insect species, and 220 reptile species in Costa Rica, with more remaining to be discovered.

The parks comprise approximately 13% of Costa Rica's total land area. Costa Rica's government has maintained one of the most progressive park systems in Latin America, encouraging the growth of ecotourism. This rapidly growing industry boomed in the 1990's but recent reports indicate a decline in tourism dollars. Environmental problems have accompanied the growth of ecotourism, threatening to degrade the Costa Rica that tourists come to see. The growth of logging, plantation agriculture, and mining are also threats to the remaining forests of Costa Rica.

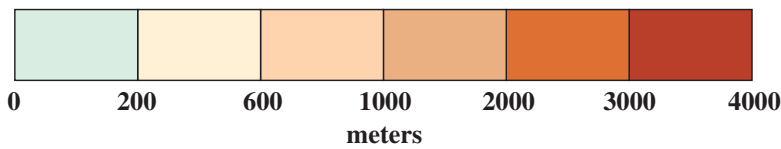
Source: Lonely Planet Guidebook, 1997



COSTA RICA

National Parks and Protected Areas

- Provincial capital..... ⊕
- National capital..... ⊕
- National parks and protected areas..... - - - - -



Map Source: International Travel Map