

Cocos Island - Costa Rica



Located in the Pacific side of Costa Rica, 543 km southwest of Cabo Blanco, **Isla del Coco** is a real treasure to behold. The renowned **Cocos Island Marine Park** was established in 1978. In 1994, after several return visits to the island, Jacques Cousteau pronounced Cocos Island "the most beautiful island in the world". In 1997, UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site. The volcanic island has an irregular coastline and is roughly rectangular in shape with an area of approximately 23.85 km², about 8x3 km and a perimeter of around 23.3 km. Rugged, yet incredibly verdant, the island supports a high-altitude cloud forest punctuated by four mountain peaks, the highest of which is Cerro Iglesias, at 634 metres above sea level. Cocos Island receives an average of 25 feet of rainfall per year, resulting in a covering of lush



green foliage. Waterfalls abound, of which there are up to 200 falls of varying sizes during the peak of the rainy season. Beneath the waterfalls and in the rivers, are freshwater fish that mystify scientists by their very existence. Because of its remote location and abundance of fresh water, Cocos has, throughout history, been a favorite re-supply station for pirates, whalers and sailors.

Cocos Island is home to at least 27 endemic fish species including the exotic rosy-lipped batfish. The terrestrial life at Cocos also exhibits a high number of endemic species. Found here are some 70 of the 235 identified vascular plant species in the world, some 25 species of moss, 27 species of liverwort and 85 species of fungus. There are upwards of 87 bird species, including the famous Cocos Island cuckoo, finch and flycatcher. There are 362 species of insects, of which 64 are endemic. Two native reptiles are found only on the Island.

The rich coral reef, volcanic tunnels, caves, massifs and deeper waters surrounding Cocos Island are home to more than 30 species of coral, 60 species of crustaceans, 600 species of molluscs and over 300 species of fish.



Diving Cocos Island - Costa Rica



Cocos Island diving...

Cocos Island has some of the most thrilling and exhilarating diving that the world has to offer. The waters around Cocos Island explode with life and exude a startling degree of biodiversity. Converging nutrient-rich currents from nearby deep water attracts plenty of pelagic action. A highlight is the large schools of hammerheads, sometimes seen in groups of hundreds! There are regular encounters with white tip reef sharks, dolphins, mantas and marbled rays, giant moray eels, sailfish, and the occasional whale shark. Other common encounters are large schools of jacks and tuna, Galapagos, silky and silvertip sharks, marlin, Creole fish, green turtles and octopus.

About 20 dive sites are situated around the island ranging from shallow but steep vertical walls to deep pinnacles, drift dives and blue water dives.

The only way to dive Cocos Island is by liveaboard - it takes approximately 36 hours to cruise to Cocos Island from Puntarenas on the mainland and often in rough sea conditions.

Due to the remoteness of the island, the water temperature and thermoclines, currents, surge and unpredictable sea conditions, diving in the Cocos Islands is not recommended for novice or inexperienced divers.

Depth: 10 - 40+ metres

Water temp: 22 - 28° C

Best time of year : Year round.

Visibility: up to 30 metres

Currents: moderate to strong

No. of dive sites: ~20

Sea conditions: choppy to rough

Dry season: Dec-May calmer seas, better vis, warmer water, more active reproductive behaviour.

Wet season: Jun-Nov rougher seas, lower vis, stronger currents, more underwater activity.



Climate

The weather on Cocos Island is changeable with an average temperature of 25°C and average annual rainfall of over 7 metres. The rain and sun intersperses throughout the day and does not affect the diving action. The main factors affecting diving is the calmer seas between December to May making for more pleasant surface conditions and higher visibility. However, during the 'rainy' season of June to November, the bigger fish and sharks are attracted to the higher concentration of plankton in the water caused by the nutrient upswells, making for some exciting diving. The trade off for all the action is poorer visibility, rough and windy surface conditions and stronger currents. Water temperature can vary dramatically, dropping 3 - 6°C during a dive due to thermoclines. A full length 5mm wetsuit with the option of hood, gloves and boots is recommended.



MONTH	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Ocean Temp F/C	80/27	80/27	80/27	80/27	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	80/27
Air Temp - Low	73/23	73/23	73/23	73/23	71/22	71/22	71/22	71/22	71/22	71/22	73/23	73/23
Air Temp - High	89/32	89/32	89/32	89/32	87/31	86/30	86/30	86/30	86/30	86/30	87/31	89/32
Climate												

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Undersea Hunter Liveboards



The Undersea Hunter Group has called Costa Rica home since 1990. From their inception, they have specialised in diving expeditions on board the adventure and research vessels **Sea Hunter** and **Undersea Hunter**. In 2008, with the addition of the **DeepSee submersible** and her mothership **Argo**, their vision has extended to the deep ocean environment and continues to encompass film as well as numerous scientific missions.

The Undersea Hunter Group runs 10 to 12 night trips to Cocos Island ex Puntarenas, including all meals with beer; dive-master service; 7 to 9 full days of action-packed diving with 3 - 4 dives per day (incl. nitrox fills, tanks and weights) and return transfers from selected San Jose hotels to Puntarenas. They are able to cater for technical and rebreather divers.

UNDERSEA HUNTER

Prices and availability on request

At 90 feet in length, Undersea Hunter is the smallest of the fleet, a classic boat offering intimacy and charm. As a special projects vessel, she is particularly suited for film or research projects and hosting individual or small group charters. Boasting a larger working deck than her bigger sisters due to smaller interior common areas, her seven guest cabins accommodating up to 14 passengers offer equal or even superior space to those of the larger vessel, Sea Hunter. Undersea Hunter has completed hundreds of research and photographic missions and has a blue water capacity to last for up to 24 days.



SEA HUNTER

2014 : 10 Days - \$5,295 | 11 days - \$5,795 | 12 Days - \$6,295*
2015 : 10 Days - \$5,445 | 11 days - \$5,945 | 12 Days - \$6,495*

Stable and robust, Sea Hunter was formerly a commercial dive support vessel used to serve the oil industry in the Gulf of Mexico. In 1994 she underwent an extensive redesign and refit to become the long range dive cruiser that she is today. The 115 foot vessel has 10 guest cabins with private facilities for up to 20 guests and boasts individual gear storage, private camera/strobe storage shelves with 110 & 220-volt AC power, zero-speed stabilisers and even a private washer & dryer for client's towels and bathing suits.

ARGO

2014 : 10 Days - \$5,945 | 11 days - \$6,495*
2015 : 10 Days - \$6,095*

The newest boat is the Argo, an intentional blend of working ship and luxury yacht. The 130 foot vessel was redesigned in 2008 to accommodate 16 discerning passengers in 8 well-appointed staterooms as well as provide a stable platform for a deep-diving submersible and for remote operating vehicle deployment (R.O.V.). Argo is equipped with three, powerful 24 foot skiffs that provide the ability to perform submersible tracking duties and can take divers rapidly to any dive site within an extended, safe radius of the mothership.



* Not included is the National Park Fee of US \$35 per diving day spent at the Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area. Prices are in USD pp twin

DeepSee Submersible - Undersea Hunter Group



The DeepSee is a custom-build one-atmosphere submarine, capable of carrying a pilot and two passengers to a depth of 450 metres / 1,500 feet. The view from DeepSee's acrylic sphere is unparalleled, with a 360-degree field of vision. The 4-inch thick acrylic sphere actually disappears when immersed, giving the astonishing sensation of total freedom and the sub blends well into the environment such that the marine life largely ignores her. This allows you to get up-close and personal with the creatures just outside the cockpit. DeepSee handles and performs with much agility, navigating or hovering with precision just a few feet above the rocks and corals while causing no disturbance to the marine environment.

DeepSee's operational mission is to collect data and capture live images of the diverse life forms in the deep ocean. To accomplish this, she is equipped with a high definition video camera, digital still cameras and an impressive array of HID lights. DeepSee also boasts a fully articulated, manipulator arm for collecting samples or retrieving scientific instruments. Passengers are welcome to also use their own video and still cameras through the subs optically-corrected, acrylic sphere and will receive a souvenir DVD (videos and images of prior encounters from some of DeepSee's early dives).

The Undersea Hunter Group offers this singular experience to the world of the adventure traveler; a journey deep into the submerged realm where few have gone before.



DeepSee Dive Sites

Everest : Depth: 100 metres Dive Duration: ~ 1.5 hours
A unique seamount teeming with marine life. The base of Everest starts at 100 metres and the peak rises to 50 metres. Everest is still fed by sun light and hence is very rich with corals, reef fish, rays, and sharks. During the dive, schooling hammerhead sharks, mobula rays, silky sharks, and big tuna fish cruising around the seamount are often observed. A family of large groupers often greets DeepSee.

The Wall : Depth: 300 - 450 metres Dive Duration: 2.5 - 3.0 hours
Head into the darkness and explore sheer vertical sections of the wall, as well as ledges, overhangs and steep sandy slopes. The fish, corals and fauna are unique and adapted to life in complete darkness. Exciting species of fishes such as the ancient-looking jello-nose fish (*Guentherus altivela*), the goosefish, and a few unidentified species can be seen. Sighting an almost mythical deep-water shark known as the prickly shark (*Achinorhinus cookie*) is a highlight.

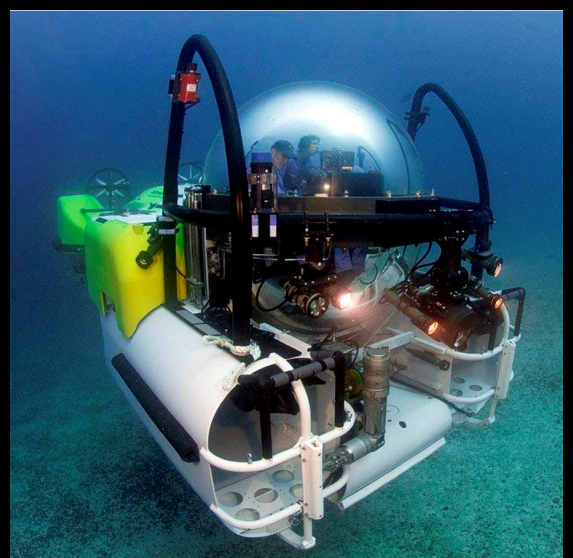
Cost

Single dive (max depth 90 m / 295 ft)
US \$1,200 (subject to change)

Single dive (max depth 305 m / 1,000 ft)
US \$1,800 (subject to change)

* Advanced booking recommended.

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