**Quick Facts**

**Location:** Costa Rica lies in Central America, between Nicaragua and Panama. The Pacific Ocean lies on the west (left), and the Caribbean Sea on the east (right). Costa Rica is a bit smaller than our state of West Virginia.

**The Land:** Three mountain ranges stretch across Costa Rica, and there are active volcanoes! People enjoy the white, sandy beaches. More than half of the land is covered with thick forests, where monkeys, sloths, jaguars, bright birds, and colorful tree frogs make their homes.

**Weather:** In the lowlands, along the coasts, it's hot and humid. In the highlands, where most people live, the weather is pleasant. It gets very hot in March through May, then cools off as the rainy season begins. The rains and lots of sunshine make the land green.

**Population**: 4.75 million

**Capital City**: San José (1.5 million)

**People Groups**: White and mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white, 84%), mulato (6%), indigenous and other

**Languages**: Spanish (official), English

**Religions**: Roman Catholic (76%), Evangelical (14%), other Protestant (2%), other and none (8%).

**Assemblies of God Facts**: Twenty-three U.S. Assemblies of God missionaries work in Costa Rica. More than 120,000 people worship in 836 Assemblies of God churches around the country. Eighteen Bible schools and extension programs are training almost 900 more workers.

*Information compiled from the CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html*
“Como está? Todo bien?” Miguel greets his friend, Bruno. This means, “How are you? Is everything fine?” Bruno answers, “Pura vida.” *Pura vida* literally means “pure life,” and it’s the way people in Costa Rica say “fine” or “okay,” or “it’s all good.” People in Costa Rica are often called Ticos, a nickname used for them all over Central America.

**Time for School**

What month do you start school? In Costa Rica the school year starts in February and ends in December. The kids wear school uniforms: white shirts and dark blue pants for boys and skirts for girls. The kindergarten boys wear a light blue shirt and dark blue pants; the girls wear light blue dresses. Everyone has a backpack because they take books home to study every night.

Ticos take school seriously! They work hard to pass special tests at the end of sixth, ninth, and eleventh grades. Kids can quit school after ninth grade, but most go to high school.

The school day is short, though. Miguel’s class meets in the morning, while his friend Bruno goes in the afternoon. The teachers stay there all day to teach. The classes are given in Spanish, but Miguel has an English class everyday too.

**Life in Limon**

Miguel and his family live in Puerta Limon (PWARE-tah LEE-mohn), a city on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. The Limon region is the hottest part of the country, and it rains a lot. The rain helps water the banana trees that grow on plantations around the city.

**Let’s Play**

Soccer is popular in Costa Rica, and Miguel, Bruno, and their friends play every chance they get. Girls like to form their own teams and play too. Sometimes the family has a picnic on the beach. Some brave people like to surf or scuba dive in the beautiful, warm water.

During the year, different towns in Costa Rica celebrate their patron saint, a Catholic saint they believe protects them. They celebrate these days and national holidays with big fairs and *topes* (parades of horses), rides, and *toros a la tica*, a bullfight where the bull is teased but not hurt.

**Full Belly**

After eating a good meal, Miguel says, “Barriga llena, corazón contento” (bah-REE-gah YAY-na, cor-ah-ZOHN con-TEN-toh), meaning “full belly, happy heart.” Miguel’s mom cooks wonderful meals, so Miguel and his family have very happy hearts! Almost every meal includes *gallo pinto* (GAH-yo PIN-toh)—rice and black beans fried in oil. For breakfast, Miguel eats *gallo pinto* with eggs.
An Interesting Day in San José

More than half of all Costa Ricans live in cities, mostly near the capital, San José, in the center of the country. Miguel took a bus there once with his father. As they rode along, Miguel saw small villages with farm cottages made of adobe (like clay), with vegetable gardens. He saw kids helping in the coffee plantations.

Miguel’s eyes got big and round when they entered downtown San José. It’s a lot more crowded than Limon, with tall office and apartment buildings, factories, and shops. People, buses, taxis, and cars fill the sidewalks and streets. Miguel loved the large square called Culture Plaza. There are street bands that play music and clowns that act silly for the kids. People sell interesting handicrafts, and pigeons hungrily gobble up scraps of food from nearby restaurants.

It’s a lot cooler in San José because the city sits in the highlands. Some of the mountains around the city are volcanoes and still rumble from time to time.

Celebrating Cultures

Miguel thinks it’s pretty neat that Puerto Limon was where Christopher Columbus landed in 1502, on his fourth trip to the New World. Spanish explorers named the land “rich coast” (costa rica). But they soon learned that the riches they hoped to find there, such as gold, didn’t exist. Those who settled here later, though, liked the rich soil and peaceful land.

October 12 is a holiday throughout the Americas, but in Costa Rica it has been changed from Columbus Day to Day of the Cultures (Día de la Raza). People celebrate the different cultures in the country: the Amerindians who have lived there for centuries, the Europeans, the Africans, and the Asians (many Chinese live in Costa Rica). Most simply enjoy a day off, with perhaps a parade.

But the quiet city of Puerta Limon comes to life for a whole week! The town crowns a Carnival Queen. There are parades in the streets, dancers in colorful costumes, lots of food, music, and a big concert at the end. Thousands come from around Costa Rica for the fun!
Costa Ricans Need Jesus

Assemblies of God missionaries came to Costa Rica in 1942 and began to hold church services. A few children came, then a few adults. One Sunday morning, a man in tattered clothes came. His daughter had asthma. The missionaries prayed and his daughter was healed. The rest of his family came to church, including a sick aunt. God healed her too.

People heard about these healings, and they came to hear about a God who answers prayers. Soon almost all the seats were filled. The first Assemblies of God church was formed.

Other missionaries came to work in different parts of the country. They started churches, and these churches started new ones. In 1953, missionaries opened a Bible school. Today the Costa Rica Assemblies of God has more than 120,000 people attending over 800 churches!

Our missionaries help in lots of ways. They teach in the Bible schools. Some train youth workers and children’s workers. They travel to small villages and huge cities to tell people of Jesus’ love. Teams from the U.S. come to offer medical help at times. Other teams have come to visit schools and give Bible books called The Book of Hope to the kids.

Church members witness to their neighbors. Local pastors preach on the radio and on TV. BGMC helped to purchase the needed radio broadcasting equipment. BGMC also pays to have many of the radio and TV programs broadcast all over Latin America. A Teen Challenge center helps those who have been on drugs to find Jesus. The churches also send missionaries to other countries.

Costa Rican churches have a lot for kids! There’s Royal Rangers, Girls Ministries, and youth groups. BGMC has paid to have the Royal Rangers program translated into Spanish. With the help of BGMC, the Royal Rangers have built a great Royal Rangers camp in Costa Rica. Ranger boys and leaders come there for training programs and for camping programs. BGMC has paid for equipment and supplies at the camp and also paid for many of the buildings to be built.

King’s Castle Club teams present the good news of Jesus to kids on the streets. There are kids camps and pastors’ kids camps. More than 2,000 kids from poor families go to the Latin American ChildCare schools operated by the Assemblies of God. They get food, medical care, and a good Christian education. BGMC is a big help to these schools.

Missionaries and church leaders hold crusades to tell people about Jesus. BGMC has been a big help by providing the materials, supplies, and evangelism materials for these crusades. Pastors need to be trained in the Bible schools so they can preach the truth of God’s Word. BGMC provides computers, library books, and textbooks for the Bible schools. Thank you, BGMC!

LET’S PRAY...

- for our missionaries as they work with the Costa Rica Assemblies to tell people about Jesus.
- for the kids of Costa Rica. Pray that many will know Jesus and help their families to know Him.
- for students in the Bible schools as they prepare to lead churches and reach more people.
- that God will call even more Costa Ricans to reach the people of their country and other countries.