

CIA World Factbook–Style Country Report

Republic of Costa Rica

ATLAS Intelligence Series — Country Assessment





Executive Summary

Costa Rica is one of Latin America's most politically stable democracies and possesses one of the strongest institutional frameworks in the Western Hemisphere. Unlike nearly every neighboring state, Costa Rica abolished its military in 1948, redirecting national resources toward education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and public security.

While internal political stability remains exceptionally high, the country faces increasing challenges from transnational organized crime, narcotics trafficking, cybercrime, illegal migration, and fiscal pressures. Costa Rica's strategic location between North and South America makes it an important logistics corridor for both legitimate trade and illicit trafficking networks.

Despite these challenges, ATLAS assesses Costa Rica as a **highly resilient democratic state with low probability of institutional collapse**.

National Symbols

Official Name: Republic of Costa Rica

Capital: San José

Largest City: San José

Official Language: Spanish

Demonym: Costa Rican

Government: Presidential constitutional republic

National Motto:

"Vivan siempre el trabajo y la paz"

("May work and peace live forever.")

Quick Facts

Category	Information
Population	~5.3 million

Category	Information
Area	51,100 km ²
Coastline	1,290 km
Currency	Costa Rican Colón (CRC)
Time Zone	UTC -6
Internet Domain	.cr
Calling Code	+506

Location

Costa Rica occupies a strategically important position in Central America.

Borders:

- Nicaragua (north)
- Panama (southeast)

Coastlines:

- Caribbean Sea
- Pacific Ocean

The country controls maritime zones with considerable fisheries and growing offshore economic potential.

Physical Geography

Costa Rica possesses remarkable geographic diversity.

Major terrain includes:

- Volcanic mountain chains
- Central Valley
- Tropical rainforests

- Dry Pacific forests
- Caribbean lowlands
- Extensive cloud forests

Highest Point:

Cerro Chirripó

3,821 meters

Active volcanoes include:

- Arenal
- Poás
- Irazú
- Rincón de la Vieja

Climate

Costa Rica experiences tropical conditions with strong elevation effects.

Two principal seasons:

- Dry season
- Rainy season

Natural hazards include:

- Earthquakes
- Volcanic eruptions
- Flooding
- Landslides
- Tropical storms (primarily Caribbean side)

Natural Resources

Major resources include:

- Hydroelectric potential
 - Fresh water
 - Forest resources
 - Biodiversity
 - Tourism assets
 - Agricultural land
-

Population

Urbanization:

Approximately 80%

Major Cities

- San José
- Alajuela
- Cartago
- Heredia
- Limón

Life expectancy remains among the highest in Latin America.

Literacy exceeds 97%.

Government

Political System:

Presidential Republic

Executive:

President elected every four years.

Legislature:

Unicameral Legislative Assembly

Judiciary:

Independent Supreme Court

Costa Rica consistently ranks among the strongest democracies in Latin America.

Administrative Divisions

Seven Provinces:

- San José
 - Alajuela
 - Cartago
 - Heredia
 - Guanacaste
 - Puntarenas
 - Limón
-

Economy

Costa Rica has successfully transitioned from an agricultural economy toward advanced services and high-value manufacturing.

Major sectors include:

- Tourism
- Medical devices
- Electronics
- Agriculture
- Financial services
- Information technology

Principal exports:

- Medical equipment

- Bananas
- Pineapples
- Coffee
- Integrated circuits

Major trading partner:

United States

Energy

Electric generation is among the cleanest in the world.

Primary sources:

- Hydroelectric
- Wind
- Geothermal
- Solar

Costa Rica frequently generates nearly all of its electricity from renewable sources.

Transportation

Major Airports

- Juan Santamaría International Airport
- Daniel Oduber Quirós International Airport

Principal Ports

Pacific

- Caldera

Caribbean

- Moín

The road network remains the primary transportation system.

Communications

Internet penetration is high.

Cellular coverage extends across most populated regions.

Digital infrastructure continues expanding to support technology investment.

Military

National Defense

Costa Rica abolished its military in 1948.

National defense responsibilities fall under:

- Public Force
- Border Police
- Air Surveillance Service
- Coast Guard
- Judicial Investigation Agency

Security cooperation with the United States remains significant in counter-narcotics operations.

Security Assessment

Organized Crime

Threat Level:

Moderate–High

Principal concerns:

- Cocaine transit
- Money laundering
- Human trafficking
- Organized criminal organizations

- Maritime smuggling

Costa Rica is increasingly used as a logistical hub by regional narcotics organizations.

Foreign Relations

Costa Rica maintains positive diplomatic relations with nearly all democratic states.

Key partnerships include:

- United States
- European Union
- Central American Integration System
- United Nations
- Organization of American States

The country is internationally recognized for promoting diplomacy, environmental protection, and human rights.

Environmental Importance

Costa Rica is one of the world's leading conservation nations.

Approximately one-quarter of national territory enjoys protected status.

Major ecological assets include:

- Tropical rainforests
- Cloud forests
- Coral reefs
- Marine reserves
- National parks

The country hosts roughly 5% of global biodiversity despite occupying less than 0.05% of Earth's land surface.

Intelligence Assessment

Political Stability

Very High

Long democratic tradition.

Strong constitutional institutions.

Very low coup risk.

Economic Stability

High

Diversified economy.

Strong foreign investment.

Dependence on tourism creates vulnerability during global recessions.

Internal Security

Moderate

Organized crime expanding.

Drug trafficking pressure increasing.

Police remain professional although resources are limited.

External Threat

Low

No significant interstate military threats.

Excellent diplomatic relationships.

Infrastructure

High

Reliable electrical grid.

Modern communications.

Improving transportation infrastructure.

Climate Risk

Moderate

Earthquakes.

Volcanic hazards.

Flooding.

Climate-driven weather variability.

Strategic Outlook (2026–2031)

Costa Rica is expected to remain among the most stable democracies in the Americas.

Key strategic challenges include:

- Expansion of transnational organized crime
- Fiscal sustainability
- Infrastructure modernization
- Managing migration pressures
- Preserving environmental leadership while sustaining economic growth

Its stable institutions, educated workforce, renewable energy capacity, and reputation for rule of law will likely continue attracting foreign investment and reinforce its position as a regional leader.

ATLAS Intelligence Assessment

Category	Assessment
Political Stability	Very High
Economic Outlook	High

Category	Assessment
Internal Security	Moderate
External Military Threat	Low
Infrastructure	High
Disaster Risk	Moderate
Institutional Resilience	Very High
Risk of State Failure (5 Years)	Very Low

Overall ATLAS Assessment

Costa Rica remains one of the most secure, democratic, and institutionally resilient states in Latin America. Although organized crime and narcotics trafficking are placing increasing pressure on public security institutions, the country's strong governance, educated population, environmental leadership, and diversified economy provide substantial resilience. Barring a major regional shock, Costa Rica is expected to maintain high political stability and continue serving as a model of democratic governance in Central America.