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**7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**

## Costa Rica Southern-Sky Party

**JANUARY 16-23, 2010**

Costa Rica is a superb destination for amateur astronomers seeking views of the southern sky's many splendors like the Large Magellanic Cloud, Omega Centauri, the Southern Cross, the Eta Carinae Nebula, and countless other deep-sky objects.

At 10° north latitude, our site is 15° farther south than the Florida Keys and 10° more southerly than the Big Island of Hawaii — which means that horizon-hugging southern targets will be 10° to 15° higher in the sky than from those locales.

**Join us**

and discover the wonders of Costa Rica and the southern sky!

**TRAVELQUEST**  
International

This tour has now completed.

The tradition continues. Join TravelQuest and a loyal group of repeat travelers for our 7th annual Costa Rica Southern-Sky Party, January 16-23, 2010. Costa Rica is a favorite destination for travelers around the world is because of its agreeable climate, spectacular natural scenery, and friendly people. Although this small Central American country is a mecca for bird enthusiasts, what few realize is that it is also a superb destination for amateur astronomers seeking views of the southern-sky's many splendors. Imagine viewing the Large Magellanic Cloud, Omega Centauri, the Southern Cross, the Eta Carinae Nebula, and countless other deep-sky wonders in tropical comfort from a dark-sky site. Now you can!

TravelQuest International and well-known astronomy author [Gary Seronik](#) invite you to join us January 16-23, for a week of stargazing and relaxation. Our [Costa Rica Star Lodge](#) is situated at a specially selected location that offers a superb combination of first-rate sky conditions and amenities. At 10° north latitude, our site is 15° farther south than the Florida Keys and 10° more southerly than the Big Island of Hawaii — which means that horizon-hugging southern targets will be 10° to 15° higher in the sky than from those locales.

And you don't have to endure a long, grueling flight or tiresome jet lag to get there — Costa Rica is just a 2.5-hour flight from Miami and is in the Central time zone!

Our dark-sky observing site is a coastal location in the most arid part of the country. In addition, we have timed our tour to coincide with the new Moon and the driest time of year to provide the greatest possible number of clear, star-filled nights. Tour participants will be treated to an unobstructed southern horizon and a grassy, dust-free observing area only a few steps away from their rooms, where North American standard 120-volt, 60-Hz AC power is available.

A perfect climate, perfect sky, perfect accommodations and a great group of like-minded, easy going travelers. What more could you desire for a southern-sky destination? Join us and discover the wonders of Costa Rica and the southern-sky!





The photographs on this and the following pages are courtesy of the travelers/photographers listed below:  
Joe Carr, Doug Haas, Laura Halliday, John McDonald, Gordon McLaughlin, Katherine Peterson and Gary Seronik.

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Costa Rica  
Southern-Sky Party

JANUARY 16-23, 2010

Join us

## Program Itinerary

### OVERVIEW

Day 1	Sat,	Jan 16, 2010	Arrival in San José, Costa Rica
Day 2	Sun,	Jan 17	Costa Rica Star Lodge
Day 3	Mon,	Jan 18	Southern-Sky & optional daytime activities
Day 4	Tue,	Jan 19	Southern-Sky & optional daytime activities
Day 5	Wed,	Jan 20	Southern-Sky & optional daytime activities
Day 6	Thu,	Jan 21	Southern-Sky & optional daytime activities
Day 7	Fri,	Jan 22	Craft Village of Sarchí / San José
Day 8	Sat,	Jan 23	San José - Onward

Costa Rica 2009 Travelers Photographs

#### Day 1 Sat, January 16, 2010

##### Arrival in San José, Costa Rica

Upon arrival at San José Juan Santamaría International Airport (airport code - SJO) you will clear Customs and be transferred to our hotel, the Courtyard by Marriott, San Jose. Depending on your arrival time, join us this evening at the hotel for an optional get-acquainted dinner.

**Overnight: Courtyard by Marriott, San José**

No Meals

#### Pre-night hotel package

TravelQuest is pleased to offer a one-night San José pre-tour package, January 15. The package includes an airport arrival transfer, overnight at the Courtyard Marriott hotel, including breakfast.

**Cost: \$120 per person, based on double occupancy, and \$235 for single occupancy.**

#### Days 2 Sun, Jan 17

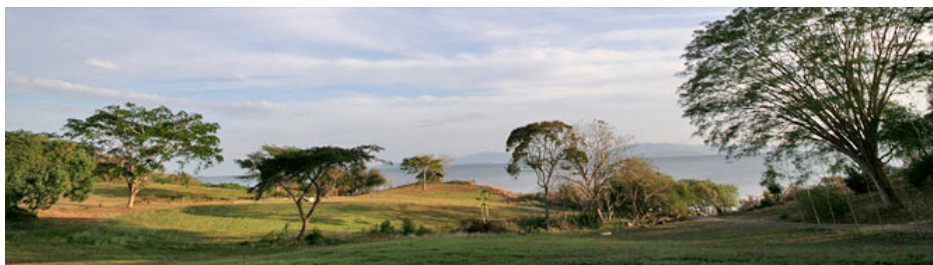
##### San José - Star Lodge

After breakfast we'll meet our Costa Rican guide and Astronomer/Study Leader, Gary Seronik in the lobby of the hotel, where we will board our private motorcoach for a brief supermarket stop for last minute items and then journey west to our [Star Lodge, reserved exclusively for our stargazing pleasure](#). Located on the Gulf of Nicoya, our dark-sky lodge is in a prime birding and wildlife habitat.

Lodge rooms feature two beds, private bath, ceiling fan, and screened windows on three walls, enabling the evening breeze to keep us comfortable. Rooms will be outfitted with red lights to allow stargazers to preserve dark adaptation and enjoy the truly dark viewing conditions. Away from observing areas, non-stargazers will find a lighted area for reading, card games and socializing. The lodge's manicured lawn faces an open southern-sky, which is the perfect site for setting up telescopes and other equipment. The open-air restaurant and lounge area overlooks the hotel's beautiful swimming pool and the bay beyond, and is a comfortable meeting-place both day and night. Meals at the lodge are served buffet-style and feature fresh ingredients, including locally grown vegetables, chicken, beef, fish, and tropical fruits. Throughout the night, stargazers will be served famous Costa Rican coffee, as well as tea and cookies. This afternoon, stargazers can set up their telescopes for the first of five nights under the glorious southern-skies.

**Overnight: [Star Lodge](#) (5 nights)**

B/L/D





**Day 3-6 Mon, Jan 18 - Thu, Jan 21 July**

B/L/D daily

***Optional Daytime Activities and Evening Southern-Skies***

Over the next four nights we'll continue to enjoy the richness of the southern Milky Way and the many deep-sky wonders visible throughout the night. You are invited to join Gary Seronik as he conducts guided tours of the night sky (at 7 p.m., midnight, and 4 a.m.) to show you where to find some of the sky's best sights with binoculars and small telescopes.

Dinner will be served nightly around 5:00 p.m., to allow plenty of time to prepare for a great night under the stars. February nights at this location are 10 hours long — the Sun sets around 6:00 p.m. local time with astronomical twilight ending less than an hour later.

During the day, you can sleep in late, relax at the lodge, take a dip in the refreshing swimming pool, or enjoy optional activities that include horseback riding, massage services and day trips away from the lodge, as well as guided nature walks to look for exotic birds and wildlife.

Included in the price of this tour are some daytime activities - a half-day boat excursion from the lodge's private pier into the Gulf of Nicoya to visit a nearby mangrove habitat, home to many exotic water birds; a sunset tractor ride to a beautiful lookout point; and a second boating excursion to Isla Chira in the Bay of Nicoya, the second largest island of Costa Rica, with 3500 inhabitants.

**Day 7 Fri, Jan 22**

B/L/D

***Craft Village of Sarchí***

After breakfast we'll pack our belongings to return to San José, stopping en route for lunch and shopping in Sarchí. This colorful village is best known for its traditional crafts and is the perfect place to buy gifts, coffee and souvenirs. Join us this evening for our farewell dinner.

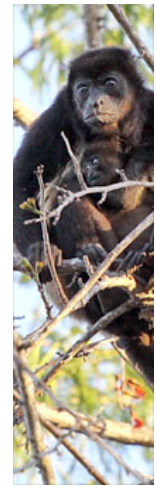
**Overnight: Courtyard by Marriott, San José**

**Day 8 Sat, Jan 23**

B

***Costa Rica - Home***

After breakfast you'll be transferred to the airport according to your flight schedule. You may wish to extend your stay in Costa Rica to explore nature preserves, volcanoes, and more! Contact [TravelQuest](#) for details.



***Our Star Lodge***

Our Star Lodge is located on the Gulf of Nicoya. Cabins include 2 beds, ceiling fan, a shower-equipped bathroom, and a porch with an inviting hammock. Meals and socializing takes place under a thatched roof open-air restaurant and lounge, located just steps from your cabin. There are no telephones, TVs or Internet connections, but plenty of electricity. Meals are prepared fresh daily, featuring typical Costa Rican ingredients - chicken, fish, beef, fresh local fruit. By day, do as much or little as you wish — relax at the lodge's beautiful fresh water pool; join the included group activities; or enjoy optional horseback riding and bird watching - more than 100 species, including white ibis, tri-colored heron, purple gallinule, double-striped thick-knee, parrots, parakeets, bellbirds, trogons and kingfishers. Maybe you'll see crocodiles, coyotes, howler and white-faced monkeys, sloths, agoutis, and iguanas. A lagoon adjoins the property's mangrove, river, and forest habitats.

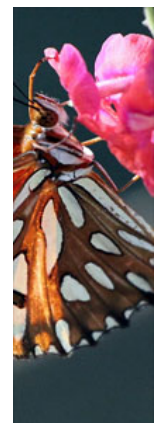
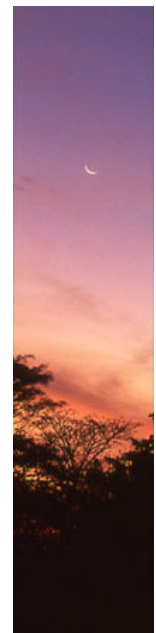
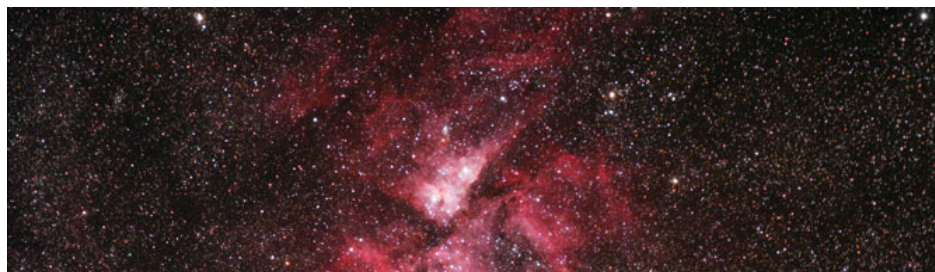
***A typical day at the Star Lodge***

Our days begin with an optional early-riser's walk to view birds, reptiles and mammals in the morning light. Breakfast is served from 8 to 10:00 a.m. The morning hours are for sleeping or for enjoying an optional activity. Lunch is served at noon. The afternoon hours are spent relaxing poolside, resting in your room, or visiting with fellow travelers under the lodge's outdoor palapa. There will be opportunities for three included activities – two different boat excursions and a tractor ride. Near the end of each day, you can walk to a nearby pond to see crocodiles, monkeys, and exotic birds. Dinner is served at 5:00 p.m. Stargazing begins shortly before 7 p.m. as evening twilight fades and lasts until nearly 5 a.m. when the sky starts to brighten. Snacks and beverages are served through the night.

Late January is typically dry in western Costa Rica. Temperatures hover in the 90s by day, with evenings in the 70s — perfect weather for winter stargazing and astrophotography! Dress is 100% casual — leave your coat and tie at home!

To view photographs taken by our travelers at the Costa Rica Sky-Party 2009, click the button below.

Costa Rica 2009 Travelers Photographs



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