



2026 TO 2027 EDITION

TRAVEL WITH GLEN DESTINATION GUIDE

Guanacaste, Costa Rica

Where to stay, eat and explore on the Gold Coast, with businesses from the Travel With Glen Verified Network.

By Glenis Graham



BEFORE YOU GO

A note from Glen

The town of La Cruz sits so far north in Guanacaste that most travelers only see it through a car window on the way to the Nicaragua border. I stopped. I stayed at Hotel Punta Descartes, an older property with modest, cozy rooms, a restaurant and bar on site, and a view across the northern landscape that I kept coming back to. The town center was a short walk away.

Nothing dramatic happened there. That was the point. I slowed down, ate well, talked with people, and looked at the view without a packed itinerary pulling me somewhere else. It was also a lesson in logistics: Liberia's airport was about an hour away, and a ride there could run around \$100. A place can be the right base for one trip and the wrong one for the next.

That's what this guide is really about. Guanacaste isn't one destination. It's a string of very different beach towns that happen to share an airport. Papagayo is polished and calm. Tamarindo is walkable and busy. Nosara is about surf and space. Pick the wrong base and you'll spend your vacation in a car. Pick the right one and the whole trip gets easier.

Every business named in these pages comes from the Travel With Glen Verified Network. Places I've personally visited carry my mark. Getting listed is free, and nobody can pay to get onto my picks page. I'd rather you trust this guide than be impressed by it.

Glenis Graham

Travel With Glen

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How to read the business lists

Every business in this guide links to its page on the Travel With Glen Verified Network, where you'll find contact details, photos and directions. Tap a name to open it.

GLEN VISITED I've been there in person.

VERIFIED The business passed the Verified Network's verification and confirmed its details.

4.8 ★ Public rating and review count at the time of this edition. Unmarked businesses are published in the network and rated 4.5 or higher by at least 100 reviewers.

Nobody paid to appear anywhere in this guide. Getting listed in the Verified Network is free; paid upgrades are separate and always labeled.

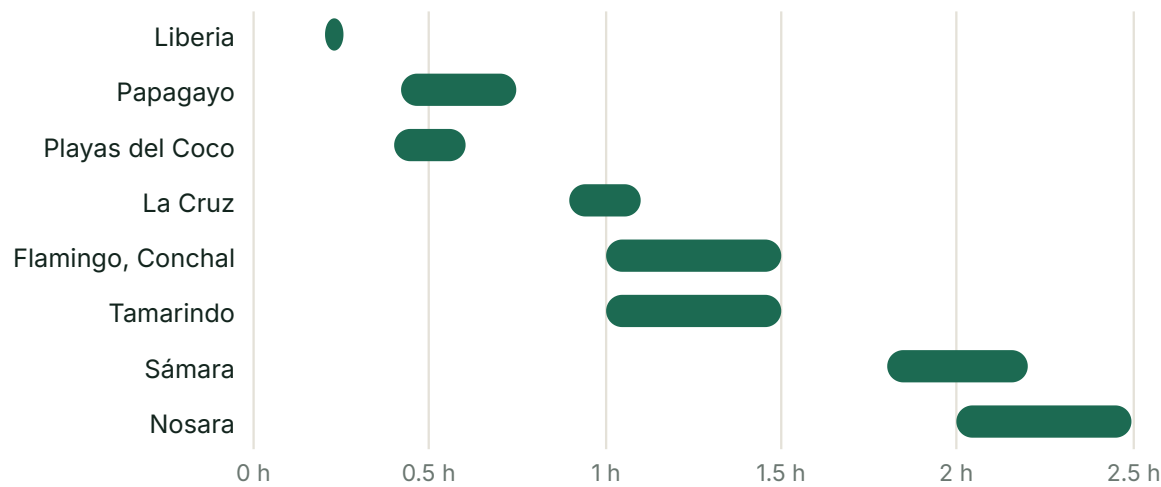
The areas in this guide

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|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Papagayo Peninsula, Playa Hermosa and Playa Panamá | 4. Tamarindo |
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One airport, very different beaches

Guanacaste is Costa Rica's dry, sunny northwest. Most visitors fly into Liberia International Airport (LIR), and the beach towns fan out from there along the Pacific. The biggest decision you'll make is which one to sleep in.

Typical drive time from Liberia Airport (LIR)



Ranges depend on traffic, weather and exactly where your hotel is. Rough roads around Nosara and Sámara add time in green season.

Area	From LIR	Best for
Papagayo	25 to 45 min	Luxury resorts, calm protected bays, sailing, honeymoons, families who want easy logistics
Coco	about 30 min	Restaurants, dive and boat departures, a local pulse, better value than the resort zone
Flamingo and Conchal	60 to 90 min	Quieter nights, couples, families, sunsets, Conchal's clear water and shell sand
Tamarindo	60 to 90 min	First-timers, walkability, surf lessons, tours, restaurants, no rental car needed
Nosara	about 2 to 2.5 hours	Surfers, yoga and wellness travelers, long stays, space and nature
Sámara	about 2 hours	Families, beginner surfers, a laid-back small-town feel, longer stays
Liberia and La Cruz	Liberia 10 to 15 min; La Cruz about 1 hour	Late arrivals, early flights, budget stops, the Nicaragua border, Rincón de la Vieja day trips

Glen's rule: if your trip is under a week, pick one base and day-trip from it. Every hotel change costs you half a beach day.

WHEN TO GO

Dry season, green season

Guanacaste is the driest region in Costa Rica, which is a big part of why it's the winter-sun favorite. It does have a rainy season, and that isn't a reason to stay away. It's a different trip.

Months	Season	What to expect
December to April	Dry season	Sunniest, driest, busiest. Book early, especially February and March, when top resorts and best-location rooms sell out months ahead.
May to August	Green season	Afternoon showers, green hills, lower prices and fewer crowds. Mornings are usually clear for the beach. July often brings a drier break.
September to November	Wettest months	Best rates and quietest beaches. Some roads, especially around Nosara, get muddy. Check tour schedules before you book.

Choose dry season if

- You want near-guaranteed sun
- You're traveling for a holiday week
- You can book three or more months ahead

Choose green season if

- You want better prices and quieter beaches
- You like green landscapes and dramatic skies
- You're flexible about afternoon plans

Booking tip: start with free-cancellation rates. In peak season that gives you leverage if prices drop or you find a better location.



Sunset in Tamarindo. Photo: ACatDrinkingTea (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Fly into Liberia, then decide: driver or car

LIR or SJO?

If your trip is beach-first and mostly in Guanacaste, fly into **Liberia (LIR)**. Papagayo is 25 to 45 minutes away, and most beach towns are under two hours.

Fly into **San José (SJO)** if you're starting with La Fortuna, the Central Valley or Manuel Antonio. A popular one-week route is into SJO and out of LIR, finishing on the beach.

Transfers or a rental car?

Book a transfer if your stay is resort, pool, boat, repeat. It's the simplest setup, especially for families and late arrivals.

Rent a car if you want to beach-hop, eat in different towns or day-trip inland. Main roads to Papagayo, Coco, Flamingo and Tamarindo are paved. A 4×4 is worth it for Nosara and back roads.

Mix them: transfer for the long first drive, then rent locally for a day or two.

Drivers and rentals in the Verified Network

Ozzy Transportation **VERIFIED** 4.9 ★ (339 reviews)

Airport transfers and local transport in Liberia

Ohana Rental Tamarindo **VERIFIED**

5.0 ★ (272 reviews)

Stress-free Tamarindo rides with local c.

Black Car Transport & Taxi Services

VERIFIED 5.0 ★ (152 reviews)

Nosara rides made smooth, safe, and stress-free.

Heading to Nicaragua?

La Cruz is the last real town before the Peñas Blancas border crossing. It's about an hour from LIR, and a private ride to the airport can cost around \$100, so plan that leg ahead.

Map tip: before you book any hotel, switch to map view and check the real distance to the beach. "Near the beach" can mean a 10 to 15 minute drive.

PICK YOUR BASE

Papagayo Peninsula, Playa Hermosa and Playa Panamá

From LIR: 25 to 45 min

BEST FOR

Luxury resorts, calm protected bays, sailing, honeymoons, families who want easy logistics

SKIP IT IF

You want a walkable town with street food and nightlife outside your hotel

The Gulf of Papagayo is naturally sheltered, so the bays are usually calmer than the open coast. Playa Nacascolo and Playa Hermosa are the easiest family swims. Playa Panamá is wide, quiet and good for long walks.

Glen's take. This is where I send people who want the trip to feel effortless. You can land in Liberia and be by a pool before most travelers have cleared the airport traffic. Do one special dinner inside the resort zone, then get out to Hermosa or Coco for a local meal.

STAY

Andaz Peninsula Papagayo Resort, Costa Rica, by Hyatt

GLEN VISITED 4.7 ★ (1,256 reviews)

Sunlit Papagayo escapes with oceanfront style and adventure

Secrets Papagayo **GLEN VISITED**

4.4 ★ (2,552 reviews)

Private paradise where Papagayo escapes come alive

Hotel Bosque del Mar

GLEN VISITED 4.6 ★ (803 reviews)

Beachside jungle serenity for your Costa Rica getaway

Casa Conde Beach Front Hotel

GLEN VISITED 4.5 ★ (612 reviews)

Beachfront comfort in the heart of Papagayo

EAT

Hacienda Blu Beach Lounge & Grill

4.6 ★ (625 reviews)

Beach lounge and grill in Playa Panama

Poro Poro Restaurant

4.6 ★ (125 reviews)

Dining at Peninsula Papagayo in Guanacaste

Dive Bar 4.5 ★ (272 reviews)

Casual restaurant and bar in Peninsula Papagayo

DO

Papagayo Ocean Adventures

GLEN VISITED 5.0 ★ (74 reviews)

Explore Papagayo's Pacific waters with local adventure experts

Marina Papagayo **GLEN VISITED**

4.7 ★ (631 reviews)

Your gateway to Costa Rica's Pacific adventures

See every Papagayo business in the Verified Network →

PICK YOUR BASE

Playas del Coco and Playa Ocotal

From LIR: about 30 min

BEST FOR

Restaurants, dive and boat departures, a local pulse, better value than the resort zone

SKIP IT IF

You want a quiet, swim-first beach right outside your door

Coco is a working beach town with boats on the water and a busy waterfront. Ocotal, just south, is smaller and quieter. Both are better for activity and sunsets than for the calmest swim.

Glen's take. If you want Papagayo's convenience without the resort price, Coco is the answer. It's also where a lot of the region's boat, dive and fishing trips start.

STAY

Bahia Pez Vela Beach Resort

4.7 ★ (362 reviews)

Beach resort near Playas del Coco and Ocotal

EAT

Naans & Curries & An Ethnic Indian Restaurant - Coco

4.9 ★ (2,197 reviews)

Indian cuisine in Pacifico, Playas del Coco

Taco Rosado

4.9 ★ (471 reviews)

Playas del Coco restaurant near Playa Ocotal

Steak House Sal Y Fuego

4.8 ★ (611 reviews)

Steakhouse in central Playas del Coco

Father Rooster's

4.5 ★ (1,685 reviews)

Ocotal Road dining near Playas del Coco

See every Coco business in the Verified Network →

PICK YOUR BASE

Flamingo, Potrero, Brasilito and Playa Conchal

From LIR: 60 to 90 min

BEST FOR

Quieter nights, couples, families, sunsets,
Conchal's clear water and shell sand

SKIP IT IF

You want a walkable, nightlife-heavy town center

Playa Conchal is known for clear water and a beach made of tiny crushed shells, and it's one of the more swim-friendly beaches on this coast. Flamingo is scenic and calmer than Tamarindo. Brasilito is the small, local village between them.

Glen's take. This stretch sits in a sweet spot between convenience and calm. It's a beach vacation more than a beach town, and that's exactly why people come back.



Photo: Haakon S. Krohn (CC BY-SA 3.0)

STAY

The Westin Reserva Conchal, an All-Inclusive Golf Resort & Spa

4.5 ★ (4,000 reviews)

All-inclusive beach resort with golf and spa

Casa Chameleon at Las Catalinas

4.7 ★ (375 reviews)

Las Catalinas stay near Playa Danta

EAT

JP's Bar & Grill 4.9 ★ (383 reviews)

Casual bar and grill near Playa Flamingo

a'lo Nico 4.8 ★ (399 reviews)

Playa Flamingo restaurant.

Surf Box 4.7 ★ (731 reviews)

Marina dining in Playa Flamingo

DO

Blue Valley Chocolate **VERIFIED**

4.7 ★ (61 reviews)

Taste Costa Rica's sweetest adventure in Brasilito

See every Flamingo and Conchal business in the Verified Network →

PICK YOUR BASE

Tamarindo

From LIR: 60 to 90 min

BEST FOR

First-timers, walkability, surf lessons, tours, restaurants, no rental car needed

SKIP IT IF

You need very quiet evenings (stay just outside the main strip instead)

Tamarindo is a surf beach first. Lessons are easy to find and the waves can be friendly for beginners, but swimming can be rough at times. The estuary at the north end is a wildlife area, not a swim spot.

Glen's take. Tamarindo is the easiest base in Guanacaste if you don't want to plan every detail. Restaurants, surf schools and most tour pickups are close together, so you can do the whole trip on foot and by shuttle.

STAY

Capitán Suizo Beachfront

Boutique Hotel 4.7 ★ (628 reviews)

Beachfront boutique stay in Playa Tamarindo

Cala Luna Boutique Hotel

4.6 ★ (632 reviews)

Boutique stay near Tamarindo town

Four Seasons Resort Tamarindo

4.8 ★ (464 reviews)

Resort-style stays in Tamarindo, Guanacaste

EAT

Namu Restaurant **VERIFIED**

4.5 ★ (389 reviews)

Tamarindo restaurant in Guanacaste, Costa Rica

Little Lucha 4.9 ★ (3,083 reviews)

Central Tamarindo dining near the night market

L' Estanco El Jardin Escondido

4.9 ★ (2,955 reviews)

Central Tamarindo dining near Banco Nacional

DO

Tamarindo Surf & Tours

VERIFIED 4.9 ★ (349 reviews)

Ride Tamarindo's best waves and adventures

Be Water Diving center

Tamarindo **VERIFIED**

4.9 ★ (429 reviews)

Dive Tamarindo's Pacific waters with trusted local experts

Hacienda El Viejo Wetlands

VERIFIED 4.8 ★ (733 reviews)

Discover Costa Rica's wild wetlands near Tamarindo

Tamarindo Estuary Tours

VERIFIED 4.7 ★ (345 reviews)

Discover Tamarindo's wild side by boat

See every Tamarindo business in the Verified Network →

PICK YOUR BASE

Nosara and Playa Guiones

From LIR: about 2 to 2.5 hours

BEST FOR

Surfers, yoga and wellness travelers, long stays, space and nature

SKIP IT IF

You want short drives, paved roads everywhere, or resort-style service

Playa Guiones is a long, open surf beach with consistent waves. Nearby Ostional is a protected wildlife refuge known for sea turtle nesting, which is something to see with a licensed guide, never on your own.

Glen's take. Nosara asks more of you on the drive and gives more back in quiet. Plan to stay several nights, not one.



Photo: Panegyrics of Granovetter (CC BY-SA 2.0)

STAY

Olas Verdes Hotel 4.9 ★ (165 reviews)

Nosara hotel near Guiones and Organico Market

Silvestre Nosara Hotel & Residences 4.9 ★ (107 reviews)

Guiones hotel and residences in Nosara

Hotel Luna Azul 4.7 ★ (111 reviews)

Nosara hotel near Pachamama junction

EAT

Posada Margherita

4.8 ★ (428 reviews)

Nosara restaurant.

Howler's Beach Lounge

4.8 ★ (361 reviews)

Beach lounge near North Guiones access

Al Chile 4.6 ★ (400 reviews)

Downtown Guiones dining in Nosara

See every Nosara business in the Verified Network →

PICK YOUR BASE

Sámara

From LIR: about 2 hours

BEST FOR

Families, beginner surfers, a laid-back small-town feel, longer stays

SKIP IT IF

You want luxury resorts or a big dining scene

Sámara sits on a curved bay protected by an offshore reef, so the water is often gentler than the open Pacific beaches. It's one of the friendlier beaches for first-time surfers and kids.

Glen's take. Sámara is the softer choice. It's what a lot of people imagine Costa Rica will feel like before they get here.

STAY

Lodge Las Estrellas de Samara

4.9 ★ (122 reviews)

Sámara lodge accommodation near town streets

Villas Verdes Samara

4.7 ★ (113 reviews)

Central Sámara stay near town services

Fenix Hotel - On the Beach

4.6 ★ (103 reviews)

Beachside stay in Sámara, Guanacaste

EAT

Samara Brewing Company & Mexican Cocina **VERIFIED**

4.9 ★ (160 reviews)

Brewery and Mexican cocina in central Sámara

Ahora Sí! 4.8 ★ (363 reviews)

Restaurante Bahía 4.7 ★ (385 reviews)

Sámara dining near Las Brisas del Pacífico

DO

Leo tours **VERIFIED** 4.5 ★ (28 reviews)

Discover Sámara with local tours made easy

See every Sámara business in the Verified Network →

PICK YOUR BASE

Liberia and La Cruz

From LIR: Liberia 10 to 15 min; La Cruz about 1 hour

BEST FOR

Late arrivals, early flights, budget stops, the Nicaragua border, Rincón de la Vieja day trips

SKIP IT IF

You want to wake up on the beach

Liberia is Guanacaste's inland hub and home of the international airport (LIR). La Cruz is the far north, close to the Nicaragua border, with big views over the bay and a quieter pace.

Glen's take. Use Liberia as a one-night bridge, not a destination. La Cruz is the place I'd stop if you're driving north or want a side of Guanacaste most visitors skip.

La Cruz

Hotel Punta Descartes (not yet in the Verified Network) is the stay I wrote about in my note at the front of this guide: older, comfortable, a restaurant and bar on site, and a short walk to the town center. It makes the most sense if you're heading to the Nicaragua border.

STAY

Hotel del Aserradero

GLEN VISITED 4.1 ★ (217 reviews)

Your convenient base in Liberia, Guanacaste

Hotel Villa Hermosa

4.5 ★ (456 reviews)

Practical hotel lodging in Liberia, Guanacaste

EAT

Meztli Coffee House

4.9 ★ (802 reviews)

Coffee house in Liberia's Solarium complex

Little Lucha Taqueria

4.9 ★ (1,393 reviews)

Taqueria in Plaza Futura, Liberia, Guanacaste

Astorga Restaurante

4.9 ★ (294 reviews)

Liberia restaurant.

DO

Ponderosa Adventure Park

4.7 ★ (10,546 reviews)

Adventure activities in Liberia, Guanacaste

See every Liberia business in the Verified Network →

THINGS TO DO

Water first, then head inland

Sailing, catamarans and sunset cruises

The sheltered Gulf of Papagayo is one of the best sailing zones on the coast. One sunset cruise is the easiest high-value day of the trip.

Papagayo Ocean Adventures **GLEN VISITED**

5.0 ★ (74 reviews)

Explore Papagayo's Pacific waters with local adventure experts

Marina Papagayo **GLEN VISITED** 4.7 ★ (631 reviews)

Your gateway to Costa Rica's Pacific adventures

Surf lessons

Tamarindo, Guiones in Nosara and Sámara all have beginner-friendly breaks and plenty of schools.

Tamarindo Surf & Tours **VERIFIED** 4.9 ★ (349 reviews)

Ride Tamarindo's best waves and adventures

Chocolate and culture

Learn how cacao becomes chocolate in Brasilito.

Blue Valley Chocolate **VERIFIED** 4.7 ★ (61 reviews)

Taste Costa Rica's sweetest adventure in Brasilito

Snorkeling and diving

The calmer coves near Papagayo and Coco are best when the water is light and visibility is good. Ask the operator where it's clearest that day.

Be Water Diving center Tamarindo **VERIFIED**

4.9 ★ (429 reviews)

Dive Tamarindo's Pacific waters with trusted local experts

Wetlands, estuaries and wildlife

Crocodiles, birds and mangroves are a short drive from the beach.

Hacienda El Viejo Wetlands **VERIFIED**

4.8 ★ (733 reviews)

Discover Costa Rica's wild wetlands near Tamarindo

Tamarindo Estuary Tours **VERIFIED** 4.7 ★ (345 reviews)

Discover Tamarindo's wild side by boat

Volcano, hot springs and waterfalls

Rincón de la Vieja National Park, northeast of Liberia, has trails, boiling mud pots and nearby hot springs. It's an easy day trip from Papagayo or Liberia.

Ponderosa Adventure Park 4.7 ★ (10,546 reviews)

Adventure activities in Liberia, Guanacaste

Blue River Resort & Hot Springs **VERIFIED**

4.3 ★ (903 reviews)

Adventure and relaxation in Costa Rica's natural paradise

WHERE TO EAT

Fresh fish, cold drinks, a sunset view

Dining here is a mix of resort restaurants, polished beach clubs and small local places. The best meals are often the simplest ones: grilled fish, ceviche, rice and beans, and a table that faces west.

How dining works

- **Inside resorts** food is easy and consistent, and handy after a travel or boat day.
- **In town** you'll eat better for less. Try a *soda*, a small family diner, for a *casado* at lunch.
- **Sunset tables** fill first in dry season. Reserve or arrive early.

Glen's approach

Do one special dinner inside the resort zone, then get out to a town like Hermosa, Coco or Tamarindo for a local meal. That gives you the best of both.

Well-rated places in the Verified Network

PAPAGAYO

[Hacienda Blu Beach Lounge & Grill](#) 4.6 ★ (625 reviews)

[Poro Poro Restaurant](#)

4.6 ★ (125 reviews)

TAMARINDO

[Namu Restaurant](#) **VERIFIED**

4.5 ★ (389 reviews)

[Little Lucha](#) 4.9 ★ (3,083 reviews)

LIBERIA

[Meztli Coffee House](#)

4.9 ★ (802 reviews)

[Little Lucha Taqueria](#)

4.9 ★ (1,393 reviews)

COCO AND OCOTAL

[Father Rooster's](#) 4.5 ★ (1,685 reviews)

[Taco Rosado](#) 4.9 ★ (471 reviews)

NOSARA

[Posada Margherita](#)

4.8 ★ (428 reviews)

[Howler's Beach Lounge](#)

4.8 ★ (361 reviews)

FLAMINGO

[JP's Bar & Grill](#) 4.9 ★ (383 reviews)

[Surf Box](#) 4.7 ★ (731 reviews)

SÁMARA

[Samara Brewing Company & Mexican Cocina](#) **VERIFIED**

4.9 ★ (160 reviews)

[Restaurante Bahía](#) 4.7 ★ (385 reviews)

Places I've visited

These are the businesses in Guanacaste I've visited in person and recommend. This page is never for sale.

Andaz Peninsula Papagayo Resort, Costa Rica, by Hyatt **GLEN VISITED** 4.7 ★ (1,256 reviews)

A stylish luxury base on the peninsula that works for couples and families.

Secrets Papagayo **GLEN VISITED** 4.4 ★ (2,552 reviews)

Adults-only and all-inclusive, for a couples trip where nothing needs planning.

Planet Hollywood Costa Rica by Royalton, An Autograph Collection All-Inclusive Resort

GLEN VISITED 4.4 ★ (3,790 reviews)

All-inclusive and built for families.

Casa Conde Beach Front Hotel **GLEN VISITED** 4.5 ★ (612 reviews)

Beachfront and family-friendly in the Papagayo area.

Hotel Bosque del Mar **GLEN VISITED** 4.6 ★ (803 reviews)

Beachfront in Playa Hermosa with gardens and sunset views.

Papagayo Golden Palms Beachfront hotel **GLEN VISITED** 4.4 ★ (352 reviews)

A relaxed beachfront stay with easy ocean access.

Hotel Restaurant Villa del Sueño **GLEN VISITED** 4.6 ★ (310 reviews)

A straightforward Playa Hermosa hotel and restaurant, a hidden gem.

Café de Playa beach front restaurant and suites **GLEN VISITED** 4.1 ★ (602 reviews)

Beachfront dining and suites with sunset views.

Papagayo Ocean Adventures **GLEN VISITED** 5.0 ★ (74 reviews)

Catamarans, sailing, snorkeling and sunset cruises.

Marina Papagayo **GLEN VISITED** 4.7 ★ (631 reviews)

The hub for private charters, fishing and boat days.

Hotel del Aserradero **GLEN VISITED** 4.1 ★ (217 reviews)

A convenient Liberia base for a late arrival or early flight.

Hotel Punta Descartes, La Cruz **GLEN VISITED**

Comfortable, quiet and close to the Nicaragua border, with a restaurant and bar on site.

Most of my visits so far are around Papagayo and Playa Hermosa. As I visit more of Guanacaste, future editions will add them here.

Getting listed is free

Every business in this guide comes from the Travel With Glen Verified Network. Getting listed in the Verified Network is 100% free, and it stays free. Nobody pays to be listed, and nobody pays to appear in this guide's recommendations.

Free: your Verified listing

- Find your business, claim it, and keep your details current
- Get personally vetted for the Verified badge
- No cost, no contract, no catch

Claim your free listing: verified.travelwithglen.com

Optional: paid upgrades

Paid upgrades are separate from being listed. They're for businesses that want extra visibility, such as Featured placement in their city and category, or a Verified Pro listing. Paid upgrades are always labeled, and they never buy a spot on Glen's Picks.

See current plans: verified.travelwithglen.com/pricing

PRACTICAL TIPS

Small things that make the trip easier

MONEY

The colón is the local currency, and US dollars are widely accepted in tourist areas. Cards work almost everywhere in the beach towns. Carry some small bills for sodas (local diners), tips and roadside fruit.

BEACH SAFETY

Rip currents are real on the open Pacific beaches. Swim where locals swim, respect flags when lifeguards post them, and ask your hotel which beach is calm that day. The sheltered bays of Papagayo and Sámara are the gentlest.

DRIVING

Main roads to Papagayo, Coco, Flamingo and Tamarindo are paved. Nosara and parts of Sámara involve rougher roads, where a 4×4 helps, especially in green season. Don't leave anything visible in a parked car.

WILDLIFE

You'll likely see monkeys, iguanas and plenty of birds without trying. Don't feed animals. For turtles, crocodiles and night tours, book a licensed guide.

YOUR BILL

Restaurant prices often add 13% tax and a 10% service charge at the bottom. Check before you tip again. Extra tips for great service, guides and drivers are appreciated, not required.

SUN AND HEAT

Guanacaste is the driest, sunniest part of Costa Rica. Midday sun is strong year round. Plan beach time early or late, and drink more water than you think you need.

SAFETY

Guanacaste's tourist towns are generally safe with normal precautions. Don't leave valuables on the beach, use the room safe for passports and electronics, and stay aware at night.

CONNECTIVITY

Wi-Fi is standard in hotels and most cafes. A local eSIM or SIM is cheap and helpful for maps and rideshare in Liberia.

Pack this

- Reef-safe sunscreen and a hat
- Light rain jacket in green season
- Water shoes for rocky coves
- Dry bag for boat days
- Passport copy and a photo on your phone
- Cash in small bills

Two easy ways to do Guanacaste

3 days, Papagayo base

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Day 1 | Land at LIR, 30 to 45 minutes to your hotel. Pool, beach, early sunset dinner in Playa Hermosa. |
| Day 2 | Morning catamaran or snorkel trip from Marina Papagayo. Afternoon off. Dinner in Playas del Coco. |
| Day 3 | Calm-water swim at Playa Nacascolo or Hermosa, then back to LIR. Short transfer, no stress. |

5 days, Tamarindo plus the volcano

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Day 1 | LIR to Tamarindo (60 to 90 min). Walk the town, sunset on the beach. |
| Day 2 | Surf lesson in the morning, estuary or wetlands tour in the afternoon. |
| Day 3 | Day trip to Playa Conchal and Flamingo for clear water and a quieter beach. |
| Day 4 | Inland to Rincón de la Vieja for hiking, hot springs or waterfalls. Sleep in Liberia or return to the coast. |
| Day 5 | Easy morning, then fly out of LIR. |

Build your own: the free Travel With Glen Travel Planner lets you map your base, day trips and flights in one place. app.travelwithglen.com/travel-planner

Back to La Cruz

I started this guide in a quiet town most people drive past, and that's where I'd leave you too. The best version of Guanacaste isn't the one with the most stops. It's the one where you picked the right base, slowed down, and let the coast do the work.

Browse all Guanacaste businesses

verified.travelwithglen.com

Where to Stay in Guanacaste

travelwithglen.com

Watch Travel With Glen on Roku

Channel code TQGVJX

Glen's travel books

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