

Field Guide to Costa Rica's Flora, Fauna, and Funga



DISCLAIMER

This field guide is intended for educational and recreational purposes only. While efforts have been made to ensure accuracy, species identification should always be verified through multiple sources, especially for:

- Edible or medicinal plants
- Mushrooms (many species are toxic)
- Wildlife encounters (maintain safe distances)

Safety Notice:

- Never consume any wild species without expert verification
- Observe wildlife from a safe distance
- Follow local regulations regarding protected species

FLORA



Red Ginger

Alpinia purpurata

A vibrant rhizomatous plant with striking red blooms, it thrives in moist, shaded environments and can be grown indoors or outdoors.



Expanded Lobsterclaw

Heliconia latispatha

This herbaceous perennial reaches up to 4 m tall, featuring banana-like leaves and erect inflorescences with striking red or orange bracts.



Torch Ginger

Etlingera elatior

This herbaceous perennial features showy pink flowers and tall, leathery leaves. It's valued for its culinary uses in Southeast Asia.



Poor Man'S Umbrella

Gunnera insignis

This herbaceous perennial features showy pink flowers and tall, leathery leaves. It's valued for its culinary uses in Southeast Asia.



Beehive Ginger

Zingiber spectabile

A striking ornamental plant with horn-shaped leaves and beehive-like inflorescences, known for its traditional medicinal uses in Southeast Asia.



Coconut Palm

Cocos nucifera

A tall palm thriving in tropical coastal regions, this species is vital for food, materials, and cultural practices across many societies.



Parrot'S Beak

Heliconia psittacorum

A perennial herb native to the Caribbean and South America, commonly cultivated for its ornamental flowers in tropical regions.



Hanging Lobster Claw Heliconia

Heliconia rostrata

A striking perennial with pendulous inflorescences, it attracts hummingbirds and is popular in tropical gardens. National flower of Bolivia.



Hot Lips

Palicourea elata

A striking perennial with pendulous inflorescences, it attracts hummingbirds and is popular in tropical gardens. National flower of Bolivia.



Sensitive Plant

Mimosa pudica

This plant features rapid leaf movements that fold inward upon touch, showcasing unique sensitivity and adaptive responses to stimuli.



Sea Almond

Terminalia catappa

A large tropical tree with a symmetrical crown, tiered branches, and glossy leaves. Known for its corky fruit and ornamental shade.



Pink Banana

Musa velutina

This wild banana features pink, fuzzy fruits and erect flower stalks. It's often grown ornamentally and thrives in warm conditions.



Rattlesnake Plant

Calathea crotalifera

A rhizomatous perennial native to tropical regions, this plant thrives in wet areas and is valued for its ornamental appeal.



Sore-Mouth Bush

Palicourea tomentosa

A large shrub native to tropical Americas, it features red bracts that attract hummingbirds for pollination. Used in folk medicine.



Firebush

Hamelia patens

A large evergreen shrub with vibrant orangish-red flowers, attracting hummingbirds and butterflies, found from Florida to Argentina.



Cacao Tree

Theobroma cacao

A small evergreen tree, it produces cacao pods with seeds used for chocolate. Native to the tropics, it thrives in humid forests.



Brazilian Red-Cloak

Megaskepasma erythrochlamys

A tropical shrub up to 3 m tall, featuring reddish hairs, broad dark green leaves, and striking crimson bracts with white flowers.



Star Of Bethlehem

Hippobroma longiflora

Native to Jamaica, this flowering plant is now found in tropical regions. It contains toxic alkaloids; handle with care due to skin irritation.



Kapok Tree

Ceiba pentandra

A towering tropical tree known for its impressive height, distinctive buttress roots, and fluffy seed fibre, valued in various cultures.



Grapeleaf Passionflower

Passiflora vitifolia

A vine with reddish-brown hairs, lobed leaves resembling grape leaves, and bright red flowers. It produces a sour berry fruit.



Trumpet-Tree

Cecropia obtusifolia

A large tree native to Central America, known for its impressive silhouette, is considered invasive in Hawaii and used in traditional medicine.



Fire-Star Orchid

Epidendrum radicans

This herbaceous orchid features a unique stem that sprouts roots along its length, with showy red-orange flowers throughout the year.



Crêpe Ginger

Hellenia speciosa

Native to Southeast Asia, this ornamental plant thrives in tropical forests and roadside ditches, flowering with the rainy season.



Common Lantana

Lantana camara

A vigorous shrub native to the tropics, it forms dense thickets, invades diverse habitats, and threatens local biodiversity.



Peacock Flower

Caesalpinia pulcherrima

This ornamental shrub features vibrant yellow, orange, or red flowers and grows up to 3 m tall, thriving in warm climates.



Bamboo Orchid

Arundina graminifolia

This terrestrial perennial orchid features reedy stems, plaited linear leaves, and showy rosy lilac flowers, thriving in tropical regions.



Lobster Claw Heliconia

Heliconia bihai

Erect herb native to northern South America and the West Indies, known for its striking flowers and role in local ecosystems and culture.



Red Twist Heliconia

Heliconia tortuosa

This tropical perennial thrives in montane forests, featuring twisted inflorescences and selective pollination by specific hummingbirds.



Papaya

Carica papaya

A small, sparsely branched tree native to tropical America, thriving in warm climates with large, lobed leaves and sweet fruit.



Tropical Milkweed

Asclepias curassavica

A flowering ornamental plant, it features vibrant blooms and attracts butterflies but can disrupt monarch migration in non-native areas.

FAUNA



Black Spiny-Tailed Iguana

Ctenosaura similis

Large, fast-moving iguana from Central America prefers rocky habitats and is known for its distinctive black spiny tail and varied coloration.



Mantled Howler Monkey

Alouatta palliata

A large, folivorous monkey from Central and South America, known for its loud howls, distinctive coloration, and social structure.



Central American White-Faced Capuchin

Cebus imitator

Medium-sized New World monkeys, these social creatures play vital roles in rainforest ecology, seed dispersal, and exhibit tool use.



White-Nosed Coati

Nasua narica

This coati species is diurnal, found in wooded areas from the U.S. to Colombia, known for pollinating balsa trees and living in bands.



Green Iguana

Iguana iguana

A large, primarily herbivorous lizard, this species is native to Central and South America and the Caribbean, known for its vibrant colors.



Red-Eyed Tree Frog

Agalychnis callidryas

This vibrant arboreal frog features bright green bodies, red eyes, and blue-yellow stripes, thriving in Central and South American rainforests.



Scarlet-Rumped Tanager

Ramphocelus passerinii

A medium-sized passerine found in Caribbean lowlands, this tanager features a striking scarlet rump and prefers semi-open habitats.



Strawberry Poison Dart Frog

Oophaga pumilio

This small, brightly colored frog thrives in humid lowlands and forests of Central America, exhibiting diverse color morphs and unique parental care.



Great Kiskadee

Pitangus sulphuratus

A large, conspicuous passerine with a black head and vibrant yellow underparts, found in diverse habitats from Texas to Argentina.



Yellow-Throated Toucan

Ramphastos ambiguus

A colorful, Near Threatened bird, it thrives in lowland forests, primarily feeding on fruit and nesting in tree cavities.



Golden Silk Spider

Trichonephila clavipes

A large orbweaving spider found from the southern US to Argentina, known for its golden silk and complex mating behaviors.



Giant Toad

Rhinella horribilis

This toad, found in Mesoamerica and northwestern South America, was reclassified as a distinct species based on recent studies.



American Crocodile

Crocodylus acutus

A large, saltwater-tolerant crocodilian found in coastal and brackish habitats from South Florida to South America, known for its shy demeanor.



Brown-Throated Three-Toed Sloth

Bradypus variegatus

Common in Central and South America, this three-toed sloth is known for its slow lifestyle, unique fur algae, and solitary habits.



Central American Eyelash-Viper

Bothriechis nigroadspersus

A nocturnal arboreal pit viper found in Mesoamerica, this species inhabits forests and gardens, known for its striking hunting behavior.



Common Basilisk

Basiliscus basiliscus

This lizard, known for running on water, is found in Central and South America's tropical rainforests, thriving near rivers and streams.



Variegated Squirrel

Sciurus variegatoides

A medium-sized tree squirrel native to Central America, it features varied coloration and habitats, thriving in both forests and plantations.



Scarlet Macaw

Ara macao

A large, colorful parrot native to humid forests of the Americas, known for its striking plumage and loud vocalizations.



Central American Agouti

Dasyprocta punctata

This agouti species ranges from southern Mexico to northwestern Ecuador, with a disjunct population in parts of South America.



Clay-Colored Thrush

Turdus grayi

A common Middle American thrush, this bird is known for its melodious song and brownish plumage, often found in gardens and yards.



Green-And-Black Poison Dart Frog

Dendrobates auratus

Brightly colored and highly variable, this frog thrives in humid forests, often found in bromeliads, and exhibits unique mating behaviors.



Bare-Throated Tiger-Heron

Tigrisoma mexicanum

A large wading bird found from Mexico to northwestern Colombia, it prefers open habitats and has a distinctive bare throat.



Rufous-Tailed Hummingbird

Amazilia tzacatl

A medium-sized hummingbird found from Mexico to Venezuela, it thrives in open landscapes and is known for its territorial behavior.



Border Anole

Anolis limifrons

A slender lizard native to Central America, found in Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.



Black Vulture

Coragyps atratus

A large scavenger with black plumage, this vulture thrives in open areas, feeding on carrion and playing a vital ecological role.



Green Basilisk

Basiliscus plumifrons

This vibrant lizard, native to Central America, thrives in humid rainforests near water.



Great-Tailed Grackle

Quiscalus mexicanus

A highly social bird found in North America, known for its iridescent plumage, diverse vocalizations, and adaptability in urban settings.



Blue-Gray Tanager

Thraupis episcopus

A medium-sized songbird with vibrant blue plumage, it thrives in open woodlands and gardens, often seen in pairs or small groups.



Tropical Kingbird

Tyrannus melancholicus

A large tyrant flycatcher, this bird breeds from southern U.S. to Argentina, favoring open areas. It's known for its acrobatic insect-catching.



Banded Peacock

Anartia fatima

This butterfly thrives in subtropical climates, often near rivers, and displays territorial behavior while competing for nectar.

FUNGA



Cookeina Speciosa

Cookeina speciosa

A colorful fungus with apothecia ranging from white to chocolate brown, found both solitary and in groups. Described in 1822.



Trooping Crumble Cap

Coprionellus disseminatus

This saprotrophic fungus features convex caps, adnate gills, and a bare stipe. It typically grows in clusters, not dissolving into ink.



Cinnabar Bracket

Trametes sanguinea

A saprobic fungus found on dead hardwoods, featuring a convex, orange to salmon cap and round pores; used industrially and medicinally.



Bristly Tropical Cup

Cookeina tricholoma

A tropical cup fungus characterized by its bristly texture, found in warm, humid environments.



Favolus Brasiliensis

Favolus brasiliensis

A tropical cup fungus characterized by its bristly texture, found in warm, humid environments.



Stalked Puffball-In-Aspic

Calostoma cinnabarinum

This distinctive gasteroid fungus features a bright red head atop a gelatinous stipe, found in moist deciduous forests, primarily with oaks.



Amauroderma

Amauroderma

A diverse genus of polypore fungi, known for woody, leathery fruit bodies and globose spores, found primarily in tropical regions.



Indigo Milk Cap

Lactarius indigo

This striking blue fungus features a depressed cap, bare stem, and mycorrhizal growth in deciduous and coniferous forests.



Karoko

Auricularia delicata

This striking blue fungus features a depressed cap, bare stem, and mycorrhizal growth in deciduous and coniferous forests.



Oudemansiella Canarii

Oudemansiella canarii

A white, gilled mushroom found on decaying hardwood, thriving in tropical regions. Notable for its piliat stipe and distinct cap features.



Fringed Sawgill

Lentinus crinitus

This fungus, a white rot species, thrives on decaying wood in tropical and mixed forests, forming clusters with striated caps.



Earliella Scabrosa

Earliella scabrosa

This fungus, a white rot species, thrives on decaying wood in tropical and mixed forests, forming clusters with striated caps.



Trametes Menziesii

Trametes menziesii

This fungus, a white rot species, thrives on decaying wood in tropical and mixed forests, forming clusters with striated caps.



Bridal Veil Stinkhorn

Phallus indusiatus

This cosmopolitan fungus features a conical cap and a delicate lacy skirt. Found in tropical regions, it thrives in rich, decaying wood.



Cotylidia Diaphana

Cotylidia diaphana

This cosmopolitan fungus features a conical cap and a delicate lacy skirt. Found in tropical regions, it thrives in rich, decaying wood.



Auricularia Fuscusuccinea

Auricularia fuscusuccinea

A fungus first described in 1842, known for its unique characteristics and classification history within the Auriculariales order.



Dead Man's Fingers

Xylaria polymorpha

This cosmopolitan saprobic fungus features elongated, club-shaped fruiting bodies resembling fingers, typically found on decaying wood.



Splitgill Mushroom

Schizophyllum commune

This fungus features small, shelf-like caps with split gills, commonly found on decaying wood. It thrives in moist environments.



Hairy Hexagonia

Hexagonia hydroides

A saprophytic fungus in the Polyporaceae family, it decays dead wood tissues and acts as a plant pathogen.



Snow Fungus

Tremella fuciformis

This gelatinous fungus has white frondlike fruiting bodies and is found on dead branches of broadleaf trees, primarily in tropical regions.



Marasmius Berteroi

Marasmius berteroi

This gelatinous fungus has white frondlike fruiting bodies and is found on dead branches of broadleaf trees, primarily in tropical regions.



Fan-Shaped Jelly Fungus

Dacrymyces spathularia

Gelatinous, spathulate fruit bodies grow on wood in tropical regions. Found globally, it resembles certain other fungi but is distinct.



Lentinus Flexipes

Lentinus flexipes

A fungus in the Polyporaceae family, known for its unique morphology and ecological role in wood decomposition.



American Titan

Macrocybe titans

Large, clumping mushrooms with convex caps up to 100 cm, pale gills, and stout stems. Found in Florida and Central/South America.



Fly Agaric

Amanita muscaria

This iconic mushroom features a bright red cap with white spots, found in temperate and boreal regions, often under conifers.



Magic Mushroom

Psilocybe cubensis

A saprotrophic species found on dung, it features a conic to convex cap and blue bruising. Common in tropical areas, it thrives near cattle.



Pod Parachute

Gymnopus montagnei

A saprotrophic species found on dung, it features a conic to convex cap and blue bruising. Common in tropical areas, it thrives near cattle.



Fragile Dapperling

Leucocoprinus fragilissimus

A small, fragile dapperling with yellow flesh, found in wooded areas. Characterized by a pale yellow cap, free gills, and white spore print.



Christmas Lichen

Herpothallon rubrocinctum

This crustose lichen features a striking red and green appearance, resembling a Christmas wreath, and thrives on rough bark in moist forests.



Yellow Patches

Amanita flavoconia

Features a yellow-orange cap with warts, white gills, and a ringed stem. Grows in forests, often with hemlock. Spore print white.