

A Guide to Buying and Investing in Costa Rica

What every foreign buyer should know before taking the first step

Updated September 2026. This guide is for informational purposes only and does not replace advice from a Costa Rican attorney, accountant, or immigration advisor.

Costa Rica draws foreign buyers with its stability, natural beauty, and quality of life, but buying well takes clear information. This guide covers what you should know before you start: culture, residency, financing, and an orderly buying process.

1. Why Costa Rica

Costa Rica is known for its political and economic stability within Central America. Its motto, "pura vida," reflects a slower-paced lifestyle, close contact with nature, and welcoming communities. The United States is the top source of visitors, with more than 1.4 million arrivals between January and November 2025. That's why there is so much familiarity with American buyers in tourism, services, and the expat community.

For anyone considering a purchase, this means a market accustomed to welcoming foreigners, with attorneys, notaries, and developers who work with international buyers every day.

2. Culture: what to understand before you buy

- **The pace is different.** Paperwork, responses, and construction tend to take longer than in the United States. It helps to plan with extra time and not mistake a relaxed pace for disinterest.
- **Trust is personal.** Business here relies heavily on relationships and referrals. Working with professionals who know the local market is worth more than any promise.
- **Language matters.** English is widely spoken in tourist areas, but legal documents are in Spanish. It helps to have translation or guidance to walk you through them.
- **Community matters.** Many areas have active expat communities and services geared toward foreign residents. It's a good gauge of whether a place fits your lifestyle.

3. Residency for foreigners

Costa Rica offers residency options for foreigners, including an investor category. A real estate investment could be part of an application, but buying a property does not automatically grant residency.

If your goal is to live in Costa Rica, consult an immigration attorney before you buy. That way you'll know the current requirements and can assess whether the property you're interested in fits your situation.

4. Financing: options to explore

There is no single path. Depending on the type of property, you can buy in cash, take advantage of direct financing from a developer (on select lots in certain developments), or seek a loan from Costa Rican banks or lenders that specialize in foreign buyers. Requirements, rates, and terms vary, and all financing is subject to approval.

5. La Fortuna: nature, adventure, and a place to call home

La Fortuna is much more than a view of Arenal Volcano. Its hot springs, waterfalls, trails, and adventure activities draw visitors year-round. At the same time, its downtown offers restaurants, shops, and services that let you enjoy it as a place to live, not just visit.

That combination sparks interest in vacation homes, personal-use properties, and hospitality projects. But a great location alone does not guarantee a great investment.

Before buying, it's worth evaluating the distance to downtown and the main attractions, access to the property, availability of water, electricity, and internet, conditions for building, and prices of comparable properties. In La Fortuna, every lot and every home has its own characteristics: the decision should be based on the specific property and on your own goals.

6. The buying process, step by step

- 1 Define your goal:** living there, retiring, renting, or a combination. Almost everything else depends on this.
- 2 Get professional guidance** from the start, so you make decisions with clear information.
- 3 Select the property** and negotiate price and terms.
- 4 Formalize a reservation or initial agreement**, with the deposit handled securely.
- 5 Review the property in detail:** title, access, water and electricity, and the conditions for building or using it as planned.
- 6 Complete the purchase** and pay the associated costs.
- 7 After closing:** transferring utilities, insurance, and, if applicable, residency paperwork.

Buying with guidance: the difference is who guides you

Buying in another country doesn't have to be uncertain. **Loraine offers guidance and security throughout the buying process:** from defining which property makes sense for you, through due diligence and coordination with attorneys and notaries, to closing and your first steps as an owner. Her goal is for every decision to be made with clear information, so you can go through the process with **peace of mind and confidence.**

Ready to take the first step? Contact Loraine and let's talk about what you're looking for.

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